10 exciting STORIES

argosy

Ray Bradbury
Brian Cleeve
S. J. Perelman
Darrell Bates
Will. F. Jenkins

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argosy

Vol. XXIV No. 4 **APRIL 1963**

Log Book	*Decorations by Graham*	**2**
A Walk on the Sweet Side	**S. J. Perelman**	**5**
Fiction is Stranger	**John Roddam** *Illustration by Michie*	**12**
Night to Survive	**Will F. Jenkins**	**21**
To Whoo . . . m it may Concern	*Decorations by Jennetta Vise*	**32**
The Day	**Darrell Bates**	**35**
Stiff Upper Lip	**Lawrence Durrell**	**43**
Prehistoric Producer	**Ray Bradbury**	**49**
Fiendish Luck	**Brian Cleeve** *Illustrations by Ian Garrard*	**60**
A Set of Statues	*Decorations by Biro*	**72**
On Flinders Face	**Steve Lawrence** *Illustration by Neville Dear*	**75**
Not to be Taken		**92**
Black Prince	**Maurice Druon** *Illustration by Hofbauer*	**95**
Panic (*First Part*)	**John and Ward Hawkins** *Illustration by Robb*	**102**
Argosy Crossword		**136**

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A Fleetway magazine

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YOUR PEN CAN PAY FOR YOUR HOLIDAY

Wherever you take your holiday this year, your pen can pay the cost—and more ! More and more papers and magazines are interested in articles and stories with a holiday flavour. The mind when in fresh surroundings develops an alertness and stores up material which the trained writer can always use.

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Log Book

MEMBERS of a countrywomen's association we learn, are to emulate Alan Lomax in scouring Britain's more rural areas to record ancient ballads passed on by word of mouth and in danger of being lost. One, now reclaimed from Market Bosworth, begins, " A diggin', a daggin', a dainty fine flaggin', a maypole, a maypole . . ." and has lived a semi-underground life since Cromwell suppressed it as a Scrannel Pop Song only fit for idolaters.

Meanwhile the Hardy Socicty of Japan is also at work in the British countryside, making a glossary of Wessex dialect for the benefit of baffled Yokohama readers confronted with sentences like, " The first time I met en was in a drong; then the second time I met en was full-buff in town street, when my breeches were tore into a long strent by getting through a copse of thorns and brimbles for a short-cut home-along." Glossaried smooth, and translated into Japanese, this is, of course, quite simple.

Obviously sooner or later the two bands of researchers are going to meet and overlap. A serious, spectacled little Zen Buddhist, rummaging for diphthongs in the streets of Piddle-trenthide will encounter a buxom lady engaged in encouraging a whiskered ancient, who sings:

" Green mwold on zummer cheese do zhow
'Tis Penny Shilling time woonce moor;
Varmer leäves vurrows vor to throw
Eämulsion païnt ageän's door,
An' meädens mid wi' goolz a-glow
Treäd out mwold on baarnyaard vloor.
Wi' a riddle-middle-diddle
And a fiddle-riddle oh."

" That's right, my dear," the Dorset lady says maternally, whipping out a vacuum flask. " Just sing it once more, and then for a nice cup of tea."

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" Oo wants tea? When do Oi geat moi point of eale? " says the old gentleman indignantly.

" Honourable Grandfather would like sip of Sake? " suggests Professor Yoshida, all excited, unrolling a long scroll and beginning to write, "Penny Shilling: a hiring fair at Shillingstone??? where articles offered at cut rate."

" Hands off my material! " snaps the affronted lady.

But Sake has an electrifying effect on the old man, who exclaims, " Dunna be a chevy-chasin' me, missis, skrikin' at me all of a hoost! Oi met sing and agean Oi metna, but things'll goo collywessen wi'out ye give over all this bompassing and belownder, dagglin' on at me snib-snabways loike a turkey-poult wi' colic."

" Slower, Honourable Grandfather, slower, this unworthy scholar beseeches! " Professor Yoshida cries, spitting on his ink-block and scribbling like mad.

The old gentleman breaks into song once more: the Japanese, translated back into the original, runs:

" *Be Oi 'Ampshire, be Oi 'Abbakuk! Oi cooms up from Winsham*
Where the gals reads copies of Arr-gosy, but the boys knows
'ow to pinch 'em."

With a leer at the lady he pulls a magazine out of a long

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strent in his breeches and hobbles away, reading a story called *Mrs. Raven's Temptation.* The magazine is a copy of Argosy for 1882—in which is written, *Borrowed from T. Hardy.*

JOHN SILVER

O Meet Rags!

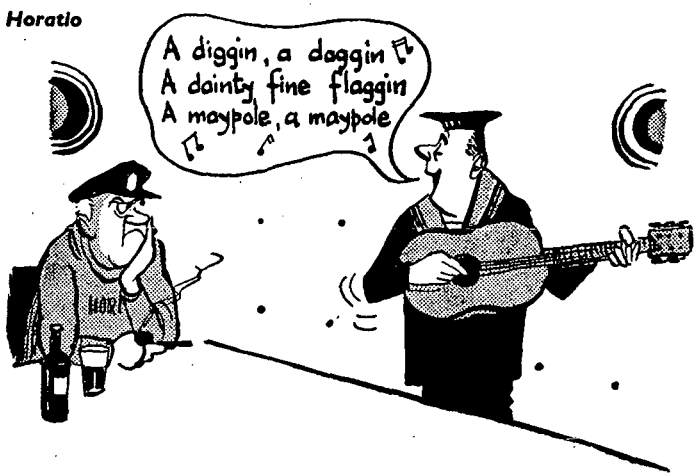
By the time we'd finished reading the huge pile of correspondents' ingenious dissections of GASOMETER, we realised that the word is an absolute gift to crossword compilers—it lends itself to an infinite variety of anagrams from Stereo Mag to Gorse Team. In December Argosy we had asked readers to dismantle

GASOMETER

letter by letter, making a dictionary word each time, and a remarkable number of permutations were offered from all quarters of the globe, including Canada, South Africa, and Ghana. Two-word "steps" were ruled out, so we regretfully disqualified E. Grote who ingeniously went on building *beyond* GASOMETER with MORE STAGES; MODEST RAGES; GET DAME ROSES; and MADNESS; E. GROTE.

Out of the large number of contributors who sent in AS; SAM; ARMS; SMART; MASTER; STEAMER; GAMESTER; GASOMETER, we decided to award a prize of one guinea to the youngest, Brian Jones, Wirral, Cheshire, who is 11.

A prize of two guineas to Robert Coates, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, for TO; ROT; TORE; ROTES; STEREO; METEORS; TEARSOME; GASOMETER; honourable mentions to J. Anderson (who fell down on GEMSTORE, but it's a nice word) and K. C. Jones for four ingenious solutions and the enrichment of the English language by the word SMOGRATE!



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A Walk on the Sweet Side

By S. J. PERELMAN

STICKY GOES WALKIES . . . AT £5 A DAY. Eighteen inches of well-groomed dog called Sternroc Sticky Wicket yesterday went walkies with his mistress. And just behind, and costing about £5 a day, was his own personal 6 ft. 2 in. private detective. Sticky is the only dog in Britain with a human " tail." He is the American champion of the Schnauzer breed, a wirehaired terrier-like dog, and is insured in the U.S. for £1,000. Every time Sticky makes more than a brief appearance among the ordinary canines of the world he must have a private eye shadowing him. Otherwise, says his English-born owner, people might feed him sweets. " You only need a few people a day to stuff Sticky with titbits and his championship qualities would be ruined." —*London newspaper*

I MUST have worked my way through half a dozen copies of the *Tatler*, and was thoroughly briefed on the activities of the gentry—all their hunt balls, cotillions, and debutante parties—when the door opened and Mr. Hawfinch bustled in. He was a stout, breathless chap in a pepper-and-salt tweed, quite unlike my notion of a fancy bespoke tailor, but then I'd never had much traffic with the breed, always having bought my clothes off the peg. What I mean is, if you're the sort who can afford to spend fifty guineas for a suit, that's splendid, and God bless; in my line of work, one wants a serviceable, inconspicuous garment that doesn't stand out in a crowd.

" Ah, good afternoon, Piggott—have I the name right? " he puffed. " Hadn't meant to keep you, but I've been rushed off my feet with fittings. Here, let's have this door closed. It's a—well, a rather confidential matter."

" It generally is if I'm called in," I said. " Nothing serious, I hope? "

" Heavens, no—not in the least," he said. " Just a curious

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situation we've run into that requires a bit of skilled assistance, as it were. Can I rely on your discretion?"

I could see the man was uneasy about getting entangled with a professional sleuth, so I reassured him straight off. I hadn't any police affiliation or formal detective status, I explained. I was merely a private operative licensed to protect property or individuals, and such work as I did nowadays was largely humdrum—guarding valuables at society weddings, discouraging shoplifters in the holiday season, and the like.

"Capital," said Mr. Hawfinch. "You're exactly the person we're looking for—someone who can protect a client of ours."

"Against what?"

"His own worst enemy—himself," he replied. "I daresay you've heard many a weird tale in your time, Piggott, but this may surprise you."

He wasn't far wrong. For the past eight years, it appeared, Hawfinch & Mealworm had been supplying the client in question, an American journalist named S. G. Prebleman, with lounge suits. To fit anyone with a melon-shaped paunch and shoulders the size of a pygmy's, declared Hawfinch, was a major challenge, but the cutters had accepted it, and, until recently, no hint of dissatisfaction had arisen. Then a barrage of complaints had begun to bombard the firm from overseas. The clothes were altogether too small, Prebleman complained; the firm had departed from its original pattern, the last consignment shipped him was barely adequate for a midget, he had endured public humiliation and was fast becoming a laughingstock, etc., etc.

"The fellow was fatting up like a Christmas goose, of course," said Hawfinch, "and our staff soon discovered why when he popped in here a fortnight ago to order some new things. He was ravenous for sweets—he'd turned into a sugar addict. For ever stuffing himself with cakes, tarts, pastry, puddings, lord knows what all. Damned if he hadn't a butterscotch bar in his fist while he was being measured." Hawfinch shrugged. "Well, he was sly at first, but once we taxed him with it, he owned up. A fatal compulsion, he called it. Go off his head if he was deprived."

"He needs a medico, not a bodyguard," I said. "I don't see how I can prevent him from gluttonising."

"You can, actually," said Hawfinch. "As a matter of fact, the whole idea of surveillance wasn't ours—he proposed it. It's not mere vanity on his part, you see; it's simple economics. He's investing a couple of hundred pounds in these garments, and should he gain any more weight, they'd be worthless."

"But what am I supposed to do, specifically?" I asked, puzzled.

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" Just dog his footsteps the next couple of days, until he leaves for New York," he said. " Censor his diet—jump down his throat if he starts nibbling toffees, sweets, and such. He feels that a bit of really strict discipline might help him overcome his craving. As for us," Hawfinch went on, " our motive in hiring you is pure self-interest. We've a reputation to sustain, and it'd be rotten publicity if our wares appeared to disadvantage in the States."

Well, that was pretty much the gist of it, except for his emphasising that Prebleman, despite his professed willingness to cooperate, would undoubtedly attempt to trick me. I promised to be ruthless and, pocketing the retainer and his client's hotel address, went back to my cubbyhole in Carstairs Buildings.

As I walked along Regent Street reviewing the assignment, I began to have qualms about it. Practically speaking, how could one impose curbs on a stranger's appetite? Moreover, what authorisation had I to do so, beyond Hawfinch's word? Denied his gooseberry flan or portion of trifle, Prebleman might decide I was persecuting him and react with violence; people with fixations often behave unpredictably. I was within an ace of ringing up Hawfinch to chuck the job when commonsense intervened. After all, the role he'd cast me in wasn't that of a gadfly or scourge but a good Samaritan; it wasn't my mission to harass the boffin but to pluck temptation from his path, to bolster his morale. The instant that I'd rationalised my position, and washed it down with a pint of bitter, all my compunctions vanished.

At ten fifteen the next morning, as I was lounging outside Coxcomb's Hotel, in Duke Street, a plump little gent with a florid complexion, steel-rimmed spectacles, and a piebald moustache came through the revolving door. He looked an unsuccessful tobacconist or a newsagent more than a Yankee journalist, but the door porter, to whom I'd slipped half a crown, pantomimed that this was my man, so I followed a few paces behind. Twenty yards along, without any warning, he stopped dead, turned, and waited till I drew abreast.

" Excuse me," he said. " You wouldn't by any chance be the Mr. Piggott who's shadowing me? "

" That's correct, sir," I said. " I take it Mr. Hawfinch's been in touch."

He nodded and, eyes narrowed, surveyed me thoughtfully. " Good choice," he observed. " Typical, but unobtrusive. Fine—let's get started. Mind if I pop into that snack bar on the corner for coffee? "

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"Sorry, Mr. Prebleman," I said. "You've already had breakfast—*and* two helpings of marmalade, I understand. I checked with room service a few minutes ago."

"That was pretty officious of you, I must say," he commented, his face clouding over.

"Merely carrying out orders," I said. "I was told you wanted me to play the martinet."

"Yes, I guess I asked for it," he said resignedly. "Very well, now—look sharp. I'm going down to Fortnum & Mason's. Want to pick up something suitable to wear when I work."

"Like a hacking coat, sir?" I twinkled, nudging him in the ribs. I saw immediately that I'd overstepped, and hurried to apologise.

"Just chaffing, Mr. Prebleman," I assured him. "Please go wherever you would normally, and I shan't interfere unless I deem it urgent. Fair enough?"

He agreed, and away we went. Everything was jam until we got inside the shop. There was such a crush of folk boarding the lift that we became separated, and by the time I reached the men's-wear section it was all too plain I'd been given the slip. Luckily, I didn't lose my head. Hurrying to the grocery division, on the main floor, I surprised Prebleman just as he was clawing open a tin of Canton ginger. He'd already choked down half a box of arrowroot biscuit, and a saleswoman was busily wrapping a parcel of barley sugar and chocolate creams.

My quarry blushed scarlet with shame when he saw me. He mumbled some bilge about a dispatch case containing official secrets that he'd forgotten in his Daimler, pressed ten bob on the astonished assistant, and bolted up Piccadilly towards Hyde Park Corner. I clung to him, and a proper chase he gave me, doubling back along Berkeley Square up Hay Hill into Albemarle Street. The arcade into Bond Street was clogged with pedestrians and I was fair winded getting through, so intent on keeping a tight rein on him that I never tumbled to his destination—the Pembroke Tea Salon, close by Aspinwall House. Before I could remonstrate, he'd popped inside, leaving me high and dry. At a sedate place like that, full of old ladies, I didn't much fancy the idea of creating a row, so I just lit my pipe and settled down to wait. When he skipped out a quarter of an hour later, all bland and pious with currant jelly on his moustache and his pockets bursting, I dropped down on him like a Brahmany kite.

"Look here, old boy," I said. "It's your waistline, and once you're back home you can get as gross as Falstaff, but right now I call the tune. Will you hand over the stuff you bought or do I have to search you?"

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"You wouldn't dare," he said, backing away. "Don't you touch me, you big bully. I—I'll scream!"

Well, that was sheer bluff, of course—the sugar in his system talking—and he turned into a lamb the moment I found the pressure point in his wrist. It seemed a pity to jettison all the macaroons and ladyfingers he'd laid in; still, as I warned him, if he repeated such a performance I'd have to dress him down publicly, no matter what embarrassment it might cause.

"You're dead right—absolutely," he said contritely. "Piggott, I've been a sneaky, self-indulgent little ass, but I'm turning over a new leaf, thanks to you. To show my gratitude, I'm giving you the rest of the day off."

"That's generous of you, sir, but Mr. Hawfinch's instructions were quite explicit. You're not to be let out of my sight."

"Oh, quite, quite," he said. "However, at the time we formulated our pact, none of us foresaw that I might experience a sudden revelation. I'm completely cured, I tell you. Now, this afternoon," he continued glibly, "I'm just going to poke around galleries and antique shops. I may drop into the British Museum to see the Elgin marble cakes—" He broke off, flustered. "Dash it all, I don't need a nursemaid, you know. I'm a grown man, aren't I?"

I had a strong impulse to retort that, on the contrary, everything about him was infantile—his passion for sweets, his love of clothes, his longing to be considered an adult—but I restrained myself. Obviously, the more I crossed him, the more intractable he was likely to become. If, on the other hand, I pampered him a whit, gave him leave to gorge to his heart's content, he might behave rationally out of sheer perversity. It was worth a gamble, and I took it. Provided he bought no sweetmeats until we met again the following morning, I told him, he was free to do as he pleased, unsupervised. He sprang at the bait, wrung my hand warmly, and departed, doubtless to violate his promise, but I wasn't overly concerned. Deep down in my mind, a peculiar suspicion I couldn't put into words was beginning to gnaw at me. I had some hard thinking to get through in the next hour or two, and I needed the privacy of my office.

At half past four that afternoon, Mr. Hawfinch, his jowls aquiver with anxiety, ushered me into his sanctum and, extracting a handkerchief, sponged his forehead. "See here, Piggott," he snapped. "Let's not beat about the bush—that phone call of yours upset me. Of course you're welcome to examine the patterns of Mr. Prebleman's suits—"

"And all his original measurements," I interjected.

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"Yes, yes," he said irritably. "But why? What was your implication, sir?"

"There wasn't any," I said. "Call it an intuition, rather." I lowered my voice on the off chance that some interested ear might be listening at the keyhole. "It's merely that if I'm right it could have a very considerable bearing on the future of this company."

Mr. Hawfinch regarded me fixedly for a good ten seconds. "Well, you've told me nothing, but I've learnt this much," he said. "When you've a problem with one eccentric, you don't necessarily solve it by calling in another. Mind you, I name no names."

"You don't have to," I said. "In my business, we're trained to figure out things like that. Shall we go along to your cutting room?"

It was well after nine that same evening when Prebleman, Hawfinch, and I finished our second round of port in the Coxcomb bar, and though my companions had tried to disguise the meeting as a social occasion, I could feel their growing impatience underneath our small talk. Evidently satisfied at last that the amenities had been complied with, Hawfinch took the bull by the horns.

"Now then, Piggott," he began, adopting his most formidable executive manner. "We seem to be involved in a very complex situation—too much so, I may say, for a simple tradesman like me. You were engaged to perform certain—ah—custodial duties on Mr. Prebleman's behalf which, as I understand it, you now wish to relinquish. Why?"

"Because they're no longer valid," I returned. "I regret to tell you, Mr. Hawfinch, that in the course of examining your files today I uncovered what I can only describe as some very damning evidence."

"Of what?" he demanded. "For pity's sake, man, speak up! I've had enough of your precious conundrums."

"Very well," I said, "but since it affects our mutual client, I prefer to tell him directly. Mr. Prebleman, for the last eight years you have been systematically and deliberately hoodwinked by Hawfinch & Mealworm."

Hawfinch started up from his chair. "What the devil are you talking about?" he burst out wrathfully. "Of all the libellous poppycock—"

"You have every right to be upset, sir," I broke in. "Nevertheless, permit me to finish. You yourself have been deceived even more shamefully. You're the victim of a conspiracy without parallel in the annals of custom tailoring—a plot that, had it

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succeeded, would have shaken Savile Row to its foundations."

As my auditors sat in stunned silence, I drew forth a notebook and marshalled the amazing, the well-nigh incredible, facts. I told them of my sudden wild surmise—based purely on instinct—that Prebleman's girth had not varied an inch over the years, despite his massive intake of sweets, and of my discovery that each successive consignment of clothes shipped him in the States had been made imperceptibly smaller in order to exacerbate and unnerve him. I explained how this had been part of a diabolical, cold-blooded plan evolved by someone close to Hawfinch—a scheme to alienate the American clientele, ultimately to bankrupt the firm and enable its architect to wrest control.

" And that someone is . . . ? " queried Hawfinch, his face ashen at my disclosures.

" Your own partner, Morty Mealworm," I concluded, " working hand in glove with Jack Sugarfoss, your head cutter—who, significantly, happens to be his nephew and the chap who consistently falsified Mr. Prebleman's measurements."

It was characteristic of the latter's magnanimity that though he had suffered beyond recompense, he was incapable of bearing a grudge. " Well, Hawfinch," he said quietly, " I trust this has been a salutary lesson to you. The next time a customer beefs anent a plethora of shoulder padding or tight armholes, don't castigate him for a dingbat but, rather, check out on whether or not there might be sabotage in your own bailiwick."

" I certainly will," Hawfinch assured him with a rueful demeanour, and rose purposefully. " As for those two precious scallawags whose depredations have just been aired, I had best lose no time in laying them by the heels. Well, many thanks, Piggott, old scout, and if you are ever in the market for a good pair of bespoke trousers that will wear like iron, we can quote a rock-bottom price." He paused at the door. " Good-bye, Mr. Prebleman—our travelling representative will shortly be skying Gotham-ward. Is there any place he can contact you? "

Prebleman smiled and flicked a non-existent speck of icing from his lapel. " I shouldn't be surprised," he said radiantly. " The nearest Schrafft's restaurant."

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UH-HUH!
At two remarks, I think
Credulity takes flight:
" I never slept a wink! "
And, " I couldn't eat a bite! "

E.J.

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Fiction is Stranger

By JOHN RODDAM

I WALKED down the Croisette to meet Carmen at our usual bistro. We had separated to do our individual shopping. Although it was only the beginning of May, Cannes was already full of the overprivileged displaying with the skill of long practice the trappings of their wealth.

I was late. Carmen was already there, sitting up at the bar talking to her neighbour. She didn't see me come in. I walked

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up behind her and laid my hand on the crown of her hair: it was fine gold, brushed and swept and burnished by the sun. She swivelled on her stool with wonderful grace and faced me, revealing long, crossed legs. She stepped down and I slipped an arm round her waist—a thing I rarely did in public—so that it should be understood that she was my woman. She responded and I relaxed.

"I may have found us a tenant," she said, turning her head and my attention towards the man I had seen her talking to when I came in.

He was much too goodlooking for my liking: a fashion-plate of a man—tall, slim, bronzed, iron-grey hair, faultlessly tailored and manicured. We summed each other up affably.

"Mr.—er?" Carmen began.

"Grahame," he said. "Michael Grahame."

"Mr. Grahame is looking for a house on the Côte and, since he wants to take his time about it, he would prefer to reconnoitre from a flat than a hotel bedroom. I told him we had a small garden flat that we let to friends. It might suit him, and anyway he would like to see it."

His eyes played over Carmen while she was speaking. He offered us each a very good cigarette from a gold case.

"I'm the advance guard," he said. "My wife will join me as soon as I've a few possibilities to show her."

"You're married?" I could not conceal the surprise in my voice. I have a tendency to ask leading questions.

"Yes," he said. "Why not? Do I look too young?"

"Not too young, too uncommitted," I said. I knew he was lying.

We smiled, showing more teeth than humour. Carmen, however, enjoyed my naïveté, bless her.

"Well," I said, "we live high in the mountains above Cannes. It's a long way from the coast; not so much in distance as in time—the road is tortuous."

"May I see it anyway?" he said.

"But of course." What else could I say?

We moved out of the bar on to the pavement. The sun was hot; it was just past midday. The car, which was unmistakably his, was parked outside. It was a long, low, open, cream job with red upholstery that looked as though it had been delivered in a plastic bag that morning.

He gave us a moment to drink in the beauty of the solid wealth that his car implied, and then, gazing mystically with chin up over the heads of the sailors and shoppers, the loungers, the trippers and the tarts, he said, "I adore Cannes," and then

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hesitated to allow us to gather attention for what was to follow. " It has everything: sun and air and light; sea and mountains; good shops, good food, a casino: people and Life."

He stopped and I followed his gaze into the plate-glass window of a grocer's shop across the street: it was full of cheese. He lowered his eyes and coughed with a hint of embarrassed self-deprecation.

I didn't dare look at Carmen. Judging that the performance was over, I pointed to our car and told him to follow us.

" Supposing we get separated and I miss you in the traffic? " he said.

I knew what was coming. It was essential to have a word alone with Carmen before committing ourselves about the flat.

" Could I ask your wife to accompany me? "

The suggestion was so obviously sensible. I floundered about in my mind for a plausible objection and found none.

" But of course," I replied.

Carmen's dress and bandeau matched his car exactly. They sat together elegantly. She looked like his woman—damnation! At ease they waited for me. At the second swing of the handle my car burst into life. I threw the handle nonchalantly into the back, untied the door, and got in. The ill-assorted cavalcade moved off. It's a very steep climb up out of Cannes. The creamy monster was irritatingly on my tail, its suppressed power roared its disapproval at being held on so tight a rein. I signalled it to overtake. It rushed past with a lurch and a horrid sneer, covering me with a layer of fine dust.

I urged my car forward, telling it that if it boiled I should drive on regardless, even if its guts fell out; but it didn't boil.

By the time I arrived they were sitting cool and relaxed over drinks on the terrace. We showed him the flat at the end of the garden. He was, of course, enchanted. I knew he would be; I wasn't.

" Could I move in immediately," he said, " and on a monthly basis? "

I turned to Carmen.

" Well, yes," she said hesitantly, looking at me for a reaction. " But you haven't asked about the price, you know."

Rushed into a decision, I played the only card I had in my hand.

" It's a hundred guineas a month during the season." This was twice what we usually asked. I looked him straight in the eye and Carmen drew in her breath.

" I think that's very reasonable," he said.

I wanted to be sick but I said, " Well, if you think it's too

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reasonable, let's make it two hundred guineas a month then," and we all laughed in our different ways; he, showing a perfect set of real teeth; and I thought what absolute hell it was that the man hadn't a single imperfection.

He came and he paid and I knew it was a mistake. That night we had to invite him over to dinner, and he talked about boats and Bermuda and Cowes and underwater fishing. He was, he divulged, a solicitor. He had been left what he called "a little money; enough" as he put it, "to dedicate the rest of my life to the sea." I had a vision of the great profundity of the oceans; of their rolling and lapping and gnashing and lashing day and night against the continents of the world. How could they know about the gratitude they were shortly to owe Mr. Grahame for his interest?

"And you?" he asked me, having exhausted his repertoire of reminiscences.

"By comparison," I said, "we lead very trivial lives. I write an occasional novel, and frequently a lot of drivel for a Sunday paper. Carmen does all the real work here. She runs me and the house and the garden. She shops and cooks and makes her own clothes. She types for me, amuses me, and gives me all the inspiration I can lay claim to having."

By the end of the first month I couldn't bear it any longer. His presence had filtered into the house and he was driving a wedge between Carmen and me. He appeared to have unlimited leisure. His car was always available to take Carmen shopping, to take Carmen bathing, to fetch, to deliver—to please.

In desperation I wrote to a great friend in England. I explained the situation and begged him to write to me immediately asking whether he could have the garden flat for July. When his letter arrived I handed it to Carmen. I watched her. She was pokerfaced.

"What will you do?" she said.

"What would you do?" I said.

"A hundred guineas a month is a lot of money," she said.

"Michael Grahame is a lot to put up with in exchange for it," I countered.

"You go over and speak to him," she said, and looked at me with great serenity.

"I love you," I said.

"I love you too," she said fiercely, but it was drawn out of her; drawn out of another part of her that had not been functioning recently.

I walked over to the garden flat. Grahame was in his silk

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dressing-gown, drinking his coffee. I was so affable that I didn't know myself. After a few polite exchanges I came to the point. Of course, he quite understood that if an old friend of mine wanted the flat it was only normal that I should have to give him notice. He accepted with absolute reasonableness.

I walked back along the drive to the house. All I had to do now was to wait. Time was on my side; I must not reveal a hint of jealousy or suspicion. I must give Carmen my confidence, and my love tempered more with tenderness than with passion. "For God's sake," I said to myself, "for God's sake, play it cool."

The faint early morning mist had risen and thinned, and now curled over the pine-clad valley. In the distance the sea glinted an invitation. I stood and watched for a moment as I had a thousand times before and then turned to look at the house. It is a low, sturdy place, drawn in tight against the rock. I went in. Carmen was in our bedroom, which leads off the long dining/living-room into which one steps straight from outside. She had her radio on. I went upstairs to my studio, sat down and began as best I could to write.

The days passed and passed, on the whole very well. I kept to the role I had chosen for myself. I went out of my way not to show my feelings about Grahame, and Carmen responded with more than usual sweetness. But something had gone. She loved me with intense respect but with little passion; time, however, I knew, was on my side.

The last day came. By the evening we had all said good-bye with protestations of great mutual affection. Grahame's bags were packed; he was leaving the following morning.

I was sitting out on the terrace, where in summer Carmen and I always had our pre-dinner drinks. The terrace ran the entire length of the house. The table at which I sat was just outside our bedroom window. I could hear Carmen moving about. She was nearly always a drink behind me. It was a part of the ritual of my day that at the end of it I should sit there and relax and listen to her. I followed her about in my mind's eye, pursuing her according to the sounds she made. She was brushing her hair now, with a long, slow rhythm. Now she was standing up; I could hear her step into her dress and the slow pull of the material over her body. She was sitting down again; the click of ear-rings; her stool creaked slightly; she was leaning forward towards the looking-glass; lipstick and the long, last close inspection for imaginary imperfections. The stopper of the scent bottle sounded like stone on stone; the scent reached me through the window. She would be with me soon. I put

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two lumps of ice in her glass. Supposing, I thought, that one evening I should sit here with my drink and Carmen were not there any more. I slumped for a moment in horror. She was there in front of me.

"Are you all right?" she said.

"Of course," I replied, "just a bit tight, that's all."

Carmen was absolutely perfect that evening. She drew me out about the book I was writing; made suggestions, sensible and absurd, and made me laugh for the first time for weeks. By the time we were in bed I was completely relaxed and self-confident.

"You know," I said, with a feeling of immense relief at the prospect of behaving normally again, "you know, there were moments when I thought you were going to walk out on me."

"Darling," she said protestingly, and threw an arm out gently to lie like a benediction across my chest.

I slept that night deep and secure for the first time for weeks.

In the morning I woke with a start; the sun was streaming into the room. It must be terribly late, I thought. I turned over. Carmen was up already; there was just the imprint of her head on the pillow.

"Carmen," I called, but the door leading into the rest of the house was shut. I rolled out of bed and, pulling on my dressing-gown, walked over to the door and opened it. "Carmen," I called. "Carmen, darling." I looked at the clock. Eight o'clock, not so very late. "Carmen," I shouted, "Carmen, Carmen, Carmen," and suddenly the whole world went absolutely black and I was frozen; screaming, shouting and running all over the house and up and down the stairs, and out on to the terrace into the blinding light of the sun.

The long, pale sour-cream job of a car had gone. I turned back into the house, and with awful logic unlocked the drawer of her desk where she kept our passports. Only mine was there. I must not go mad. I had to go on living and to find something to do; I had to find a purpose. I sat and smoked—I don't know for how long—one cigarette after another.

After a time I walked back into our bedroom. The imprint of her head was still on the pillow. I opened all the drawers of all the cupboards. She hadn't taken a thing. I took everything out, very quietly and gently and with total, absolute love. And I laid them out all over the house: her dresses, her shirts, her skirts and trousers, her underclothes, her shoes and stockings, her jewellery and her make-up. I laid them over her dressing-table, the bed, and over the chairs. I took them into the next room and laid them over the tables and chairs and benches, over

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the desk and over the banisters, and over the stairs leading up to my studio. The house was covered in her things. Every drawer was empty. The house was full of her presence. I arranged and rearranged, so that the colours of her clothes and her jewellery, of her bags and shoes, matched or contrasted and lay in patterns.

When I had finished I said to myself, "You're not mad, but nobody else in the world would believe it." And the house had become Carmen. It lacked only her physical presence, and that I would evoke. I would bring her back again. I would do that.

It must have been late afternoon. Feeling that the worst was over, I was suddenly aware of feeling hungry. I lit a cigarette and ate some olives. I went upstairs and gathered up all the pages of the book I was writing and put them away in a file. Taking all the paper I could find, a pen and a handful of refills, I started back downstairs. I suddenly saw the whole room in a new perspective. Carmen was there in every possible form and mood: day and night, morning and evening; in all the places and over all the years I had known her.

I walked across to the long refectory table and cleared a space for myself by moving a bracelet, a shoe, a bag, a shirt, and a hat. I went into the cellar and drew out six bottles of brandy which I put beside the table with a large jar of olives and a stock of cigarettes. Sitting down, I began to write. I was going to bring Carmen back. And I said to myself that nothing that had ever happened to Carmen since I had known her would be left out. I had a terrible, absolutely relentless memory, and the room in which I sat was a museum of Carmen. No detail of word or thought or look or gesture would be too remote or too slight to relate. I began to write. I was saving myself and was going to bring her back.

I wrote, drank, smoked, and lived on olives. I never answered the door. When it was dark I turned on the light, and when it was light I turned it off. I slept day or night, whenever I was so tired that sleep would not wait; sleeping on a sofa that was next to the table, and when I woke I got up and began writing again. So that there was no time to think of the present which I knew I couldn't face. At every break in my writing I would walk round the room and touch and rearrange and smooth Carmen's things, and think about the next paragraph and sit down and start writing again.

I have no idea how many days passed like this; it might have been ten or twenty or thirty. Time had no meaning for me at

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all, my own contact with the present was the passage between day and night. The paper piled up on the table. I numbered my pages out of habit. There were seven hundred and twenty-eight, and I hadn't read over a word of all I had written.

Then one evening—it must have been evening because the lights were on—I reached the point where this story begins: "I walked down the Croisette to meet Carmen at our usual bistro." And when I had written that, I put my pen down because I knew I had suddenly reached a crisis. I poured myself a very long drink, lit a cigarette and, putting some in my shirt-pocket, I opened the front door for the first time since that morning, long ago, when Carmen had gone. The air was strong and beautiful, and the earth was exuding a damp, pent-up heat. I sat down at our little drink table under the bedroom window and wondered what I could do to save myself. I needed somebody so much—almost anybody would have done.

I was sitting there listening as I had done in the past for Carmen to start brushing her hair, when suddenly I heard a car stop at the end of the drive. Someone got out and there was a scrunch of gravel. The car moved off and someone began walking down the drive. I was torn between bolting into the house and locking myself in, and sitting still and waiting and accepting whatever was coming to me. Finally it was the solid weight of tiredness that held me there in my chair. It seemed a long drive as I waited for the person to appear. It's a woman, I thought, as I heard and imagined the high heels and the tilt of the shoe in the gravel.

"It's Carmen," I said. "It's Carmen coming back." And I sat there in the solid conviction of her coming, and I cried with all the pent-up emotion due to my work, no sleep and lack of food, too many cigarettes and too much drink, and the whole sustained concentration. "Play this cool," I said to myself, "play this cool," and I disintegrated into a flood of exhaustion and incredible joy.

I saw her first through a mist. She stood and then knelt beside me.

"Darling," she said. "Darling, I'm back, I'm back."

"Yes," I said, "yes," but I couldn't take the whole thing in.

"I'll get you a drink, my darling," she said, and she opened the door and turned on the lights and stood there transfixed by a vision of her entire material presence. She stood there as though on a mountain and beheld the whole of her past. Then her perspective shortened and she saw the table and the chair, the bottles, the olive stones and the cigarette butts, and finally the

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small space cleared among her things and the pile upon pile of paper. She tiptoed over to the table and she read the page number and the last words. The bedroom door was open. She looked in; the imprint of her head was still upon the pillow.

"Carmen," I called, "Carmen, Carmen," and she came out of the house. "I thought you had gone away again," I said. She pulled me to my feet and undressed me and put me to bed.

In the morning I woke with a start; the sun was streaming into the room between the curtains. I turned my head with feverish anxiety to assure myself that Carmen was there. She moved over, eyes closed, to face me.

"Carmen," I said. "Carmen, Carmen, thank God. Oh, thank God. I dreamed that you had gone off with the immaculate lodger."

She opened her eyes very slowly. They were cool and clear and she looked as though she had been born yesterday.

"It wasn't a dream," she said. "I did, but try to detach yourself sometimes from your stories."

"What do you mean?" I said. "You did? Detach myself?" But she had gone straight back to sleep.

I rolled out of bed and began pulling on my dressing-gown. The room was littered with Carmen's belongings. What has been going on here? I thought. I opened the door and stood transfixed. Carmen, Carmen, I almost shouted. I turned round; her head moved and a shaft of sunlight passing between the drawn curtains laced and burnished her hair.

I went into the room, taking in the scene with mounting astonishment.

"Carmen," I said, "Carmen." I leaned over the table and saw the stack of closely-written numbered pages.

"What on earth have I been doing?" I said. I sat down and began reading.

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SOMETHING BLUE!

from a Spanish newspaper's agony column

> Star of my soul, suppose you could not manage last night. How I suffer. I adore you in spite of obstacles. Coach in that spot awkward. Better behind church, in front sacristy. You know. Till tomorrow, my heart, I cannot live far from your eyes. Please wear sky-blue drawers.

NINA EPTON, *Love and the Spanish*

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NIGHT TO SURVIVE

"Everything's gone to hell," he said, "I'm getting out"

BY WILL F. JENKINS

AN order went out for a squadron of jet fighters to shift its base from Kini to Tupuro, neither island being famed for anything. Both were peacetime airbases in the Pacific. The wives and children of the fighter pilots had arrived at Tupuro by sea, and settled down in assigned quarters to wait for their men.

At thirty-thousand feet and in reasonable comfort, breathing oxygen through a demand-valve supply and properly attired for high-level flying, Thornton thought about his wife. He liked to think about her; he was No. 2 man in the formation of jets changing base to Tupuro, and he had no need just now to think of anything less personal.

The jet formation had been airborne for two hours, had crossed some of the Solomons and most of the Bismarcks. Presently it would pass over a corner of the Carolines, and later there would be a long, long concrete runway with waving palms visible at the field's edge, and there would be Thornton's small daughter to hug him enthusiastically and his wife to greet him with more restraint but probably deeper affection. It was pleasant to anticipate this behind the goggles of one's oxygen mask. Thornton flew on, thinking pleasurably, with all the universe seeming to be composed solely of blue sky and curiously mottled sea, with stationary white clouds here and there . . .

In the brushwood just outside a Bismarck Archipelago village, a brown-and-white dog lay tensely on watch. The houses were built on poles half a tree's height above the ground. There were native dogs in the village, but the watching dog ignored them. He was a white man's dog, though lean to starvation and with a half-healed spear wound on one flank. The wound and his hunger came from the fact that his master was dead, and there was no room for such as he was in the local society. The dogs of this village were not companions to men. They were scavengers. On occasion they were food. So the brown-and-white dog was

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outlawed and hunted for his deviation from the currishness that was expected of dogs in the Bismarcks.

Now he waited tensely for a thing to happen. It did. A frizzy-haired, nearly naked, brown woman dumped offal on the ground. It was mostly fish entrails and the like. Instantly the village curs formed a snarling, gobbling swarm upon and about it.

The brown-and-white dog trotted into the village. Yards from the yapping creatures he growled at them with the mingling of contempt and desperation that had developed since his master's death. The village dogs yelped and fled to form a screaming, falsetto ring about him. Now and again one tried to dash and snap at him. None quite achieved it. The brown-and-white dog ignored them. He wolfed down the food put out for all of them. They screamed and yelped more loudly still.

A man in a tree house threw a spear. The brown-and-white dog dodged it expertly. He wolfed food for one more second and then plunged for the surrounding jungle. He was followed by the hysterically screaming pack he had disgraced. An arrow barely missed him. He dodged past it, and a second spear passed between his fore- and hindlegs, almost tripping him. Then he vanished into the underbrush. The village dogs did not dare to follow him.

At this same time, a minor cyclonic disturbance began as an almost tentative response to purely local conditions. Presently it was kicking up a not-impressive sea, and a little later it felt the influence of a barometric low off to one side and became more ambitious. In another hour it began to move northward. It acquired a conviction of its own importance. By nightfall it would become a nasty bit of weather crossing the jet planes' track in a truculent mood, as if daring them to come back and see what they'd get. In forty hours or so, however, it would run into a much more potent weather system to northward and end as a sodden tropic rainstorm on wholly empty sea.

And now a fatigue crack caused by vibration developed in the metal pipe that was the fuel line to Thornton's port engine. It was under pressure and it vibrated. It ought not to have but it did. And at thirty-thousand feet, with Bougainville and Rabaul left far behind and most of the Bismarcks passed, suddenly it split. Pressure-driven jet fuel sprayed wildly. Instantly the engine caught fire. When Thornton reacted automatically, the extinguisher jammed.

Still-spouting fluid spread inside the wing, atomised by the force behind it and in intimate contact with the flames of the engine. It ignited. A fuel tank blew, which should have been impossible. There was a monstrous flare of flame, in which it

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seemed that the whole jet must disintegrate. It did not. It flew gallantly out of a mass of black smoke and yellow fire, but it was through. Finished. Voices babbled in Thornton's helmet headphones. He was trying this and trying that and nothing responded. He said irritably, "Everything's gone to hell. I'm getting out."

Flame spurted madly once more. He painstakingly jerked his helmet cables clear. He switched his oxygen to the survival kit that should go out with him. He yanked at the ejection lever.

Something hit him violently. It tried to snap his head loose and, failing in that enterprise, grabbed his arm and deftly wrung it off. It felt like that, anyhow. Then his helmet almost left his flying-suit and settled back, covering one eye. A few seconds later, there was a man-killing jerk, which could only be his parachute and ought to have been reassuring. But there were reasons for feeling something less than complacency.

He found, to be sure, that he dangled beneath a properly opened blossom of white nylon. He saw his plane dive off towards nowhere, with a trail of black smoke behind it. One of the other jets dived past him within hundreds of feet to find out if he was still alive. He moved an arm halfheartedly to say that he was, for what good the information would do. But already his estimate of the situation was little short of morbid.

He dangled midway between the blue sky which was one half of the universe, and the mottled, cloud-dotted sea which was the other. He might land in the ocean. He might get his rubber raft inflated. He might even get into it. But there was bad weather coming. He might land on one of the islands just below. He could also land in impenetrable jungle; the inhabitants of this area were officially termed "untrustworthy," and his prospects would be dim. His only possible hope for assistance was from Tupuro, nine hundred miles away.

Actually, Tupuro was already informed and in action. Before Thornton was down to the level of the separate cumulus clouds, clumsy search-and-rescue planes were already beginning to roll out of their hangars and bellowing as they prepared to take off to his aid. But they were nine hundred miles downwind. Being slow planes, it was not conceivable that they could reach this spot before nightfall. Radio calls went out as he continued to descend. They found a carrier which could travel at top speed and arrive somewhere in this area an hour before daybreak. That was the best it could do. They found a destroyer which could turn and going all out would get there at dawn, but not before. A plodding tanker was nearer still, and it might turn up with the new day, but no earlier. These ships changed course; they

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came to try to help. In a surprisingly short time the search-and-rescue planes rolled down their runways and rose heavily from them.

And Thornton went down and down. Soon he went through clammy white obscurity and found that he was above solid ground, but being carried by the wind so that he would pass over the island and would land in the sea beyond it.

The other jets flew anxiously about him as he descended. He spilt air from his chute with his one good arm. There were mountains on this island, and there was impenetrable jungle, and there was a house which had belonged to a white trader now dead and mourned only by a brown-and-white dog. Neither Thornton nor any of the other pilots saw it, nor the three or four native villages inhabited by uncivilised persons whom the briefing sheets called "untrustworthy." But there was a small bay downwind and a patch of coral sand, plainly to be seen.

If Thornton could reach that beach he would not have to try to ride out a night's bad weather in a survival-kit rubber raft. He would be less likely to have trouble with uncharitable local inhabitants. It would be a perfect place from which to be picked up. It was where he should land if possible, but it wasn't possible.

He almost made it, though. Spilling air recklessly, and with his ground speed increasing appallingly as the jungle trees drew near, he simply cut it too fine. His line of motion was excellent, but the topmost branches of a big casuarina tree intercepted him. He crashed into them; sank lower beyond them; banged into other trees, and ultimately got to ground in the thickest possible jungle three hundred yards from the beach. And in his descent he acquired a broken ankle.

With one good arm and one really usable leg, it took him two hours to crawl and butt and squirm his way to the coral beach. He doggedly dragged his survival kit behind him. At first he heard the jets still booming solicitously overhead, hoping to get some assurance that he had survived his landing. But their fuel was limited and they had a long way to go. They could stay only so long. When at last Thornton saw blue sky and white sand and the waters of the bay before him, there were only faint and distant drummings in the air. The jets had had to leave while they still had fuel for Tupuro.

It was then four o'clock in the afternoon, local time. The inhabitants of the island would have been roused by the jets circling Thornton's chute. They'd be sophisticated about planes and men who came down from them in parachutes. There'd be no welcome-strange-white-god business here.

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These savages were practical, and Thornton represented wealth. They'd probably find him well before sundown.

So he crawled out on to the beach until he was well away from the jungle's edge. He checked over the kit he'd so painfully retained. There were emergency rations and a small pistol and ammunition. There were bandages and antiseptic, and a rubber raft, and flares and such oddments—mostly useless. But he did what a practically one-armed man could for his own broken ankle. It was not much. He got the pistol handy.

He was in the act of scooping out a hollow in the sand when he saw the dog.

He came trotting down the beach with the remnants of that self-important air a white man's dog always seems to wear. He was big, and brown-and-white, and thin to emaciation. There was a half-healed spear wound in his flank.

Thornton stirred and the dog halted. His hackles rose. He moved sideways in order to be downwind from Thornton to get his scent. He wore a collar. Thornton said, "Hullo, pup!"

The dog backed away, not turning tail, but deeply and terribly suspicious.

"Come and make friends," said Thornton. The dog had plainly been a white man's dog, but it was half starved. Thornton could foresee an extremely unpleasant time ahead of him. His wife was on Tupuro. He did not want to think of how she would feel when she learnt of his situation. He said again, "Come and make friends, boy!"

The dog seemed to quiver. He backed away again. Then he turned and trotted to the jungle, watching Thornton the while. It occurred to Thornton that he'd stayed just out of spear-throwing distance. He'd been cautious.

Thornton returned to the scooping out of a hollow in the sand. He tried to think about the dog to keep from thinking about his wife. He failed. But he could think about his little daughter, Ella. She wouldn't worry much. She was too young to know such fear as his wife would be feeling now. He dug industriously. His ankle hurt a great deal. His wrenched arm was painful.

There was a stirring at the jungle floor not far away. He saw the dog's muzzle between brush branches as it sniffed vainly for the man's scent. Thornton said conversationally, "The wind's wrong, pup. You can't smell me upwind!"

The dog's muzzle vanished. It reappeared at another place. No dog truly trusts his eyesight, as no man is willing to depend on his nose. This dog could not accept Thornton as different from the local citizenry by his appearance alone. He needed in his nostrils that compounded odour of tobacco and linen and soap

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and leather which means that a man can be a dog's master and friend.

Thornton continued to scoop out sand. It was by no means certain that it would do any good. Night is night and darkness is darkness, and the warriors of this island would have adequate traditions about the use of both in dealing with a lone stranger. The dog suggested ominous possibilities.

"It would be interesting," said Thornton in the same conversational tone, "to know how you came to be lost and half starved. You wouldn't be left by a boat. You could have belonged to a white man, if one lived here. Possible."

Thoughts of his wife returned. He was in a very tight place. Everything might work out all right, or everything could work out all wrong. But he and his wife and small Ella—that relationship had been entirely right and fitting and satisfying. Thornton clamped his jaws together. His situation was only partly his own. It was a danger to all three of them, to what the three of them together meant. And it was not as an individual but as the head of his own private family that he knew a grimness and a resolution beyond expression.

His ankle hurt very much. His wrenched arm felt no better. He began to extend the mound of sand, not parallel to the jungle, as before, but as a wing which might be some protection from observation from one side.

"You couldn't have been on your own too long," he told the dog presently. He could endure his hurts, but not thoughts of his wife just now. "You know that I'm something you should recognise. You're curious. You wouldn't be curious about a native of this place. You'd know about him! But you don't know me and you want to find out. What happened to your master, boy?"

The dog whined softly. Thornton stopped the construction of a mound to his left and began to pile up a mound to the right. From time to time he examined the wall of jungle and the white line of beach. There were clouds on the horizon. The wind changed direction. The sound of surf became louder.

"I am beginning to wonder," said Thornton detachedly a good while later. "There are local citizens. That injury you've got is proof of it. They know I've landed, but they haven't shown themselves. Why? I won't believe they're bashful. Will they try surprise after dark?"

The dog whined again. The sun was low now. The clouds were much more dense. The sound of surf on what was now the island's windward shore was very much louder. The wind had changed a good deal. The dog whined still again.

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"What's up?—Oh? The wind changed and you can scent me? Come along out, boy. Come over here and we'll see what's what. Come along!"

He coaxed. It kept his mind busy. A part of that mind demanded angrily what was the sense of coaxing a dog to friendship, when night was falling, and highly undependable tribesmen were definitely not showing themselves—which was as ominous a sign as if they had. But anything was better than thinking about what he would lose besides his own life if things went very wrong here. His wife . . . and Ella.

The dog took a step out of the jungle. He was tense in every muscle. His eyes were luminous and imploring. He whined desperately and took a step forward, and almost ran away, and whined again. It is the nature of honourable dogs that they want to be the servants of men. This dog had lost that high estate. He needed to attain it again, but he was afraid.

Finally the dog crawled towards Thornton, with many pauses and often on the verge of flight. More and more hesitantly, his ears flattened and his belly almost to the ground, the dog moved closer. He whined. Thornton put out his hand where the dog could sniff at it. He held it perfectly still. After an age-long stillness, the dog licked it.

Thornton laughed. He scratched the dog in appropriate places. The dog moaned. Suddenly he dashed madly in small circles, making foolish noises. He came back to the man and buried his head between his arm and body. He made heartrending sounds, which were little cries of joy.

The sun sank lower and lower, and clouds covered a greater proportion of the sky, and the surf was louder still. Thornton looked more sharply at the jungle's edge now. He started his emergency rations and shared them with the dog. The dog ate hungrily, but he had been well brought up. With delicate care he took what was offered him and gulped it instantly, his tail wagging. Once he crawled roughly over Thornton's body and thrust his head over the mound he had made. He bristled. He rumbled ferociously. Thornton saw nothing, but he made sure his pistol was handy.

It was some time later—the sun had not quite set, but clouds hid it—that a man appeared upon the beach. He stepped out of the jungle a long way off—well out of accurate pistol range. He was a nightmare clad in cotton trousers. He had frizzy hair, lime-bleached to crimson. An ornament of pearl-shell dangled from a hole in the septum of his nose. His ears were pierced and stretched, and decorated with oddments such as flying-fox claws

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and empty brass cartridge cases. But he wore cotton trousers, not yet tattered. He carried two slender, barbed, throwing-spears in his hand.

He gazed elaborately out to sea. There was the beginning of haze upon the water now. Deliberately oblivious of Thornton, he gazed up the beach away from him. Then he turned and started violently in palpably false astonishment at the sight of a white man sitting in a scooped-out hole in the beach, with a large dog growling throatily beside him. He came gaily towards Thornton, pantomiming amazement and joy and the warmest possible affection.

"Hold it!" said Thornton when he was thirty yards away. He showed his pistol while the dog growled. The savage stopped short. "Anybody talk English around here?" Thornton demanded. Then, feeling foolish, he attempted pidgin. "Any one-fella boy talk 'm b'long along white man?"

The savage, wreathed in smiles, replied at length—unintelligibly. His throwing-spears were very nasty to look at; they were horribly barbed. The savage orated, beaming and waving his arms. Then the dog whirled beside Thornton and barked furiously towards the rear. He seemed to scream with fury.

Thornton jerked about. There were two other savages on the beach just beyond the jungle's edge. These were within twenty paces. One was in the act of launching a throwing-spear. The other was in an early stage of the same action.

Thornton's pistol cracked. The spear thrower flinched but his hideously barbed missile landed within inches. The other fled, dropping his weapon altogether. Both dived for the jungle. Thornton jerked his head back, and the nightmare figure was also in flight.

Then the daylight died. Towards the last, the sun was hidden by thick clouds which were definitely storm-cloud formations. After nightfall there came wind gusts making truculent noises. The night became blacker than black, and the sound of surf grew loud. And then there came irony.

Thornton heard roarings in the sky. At first they were far away. They came nearer; they boomed overhead. Thornton fired the flare pistol from his survival kit. Apparently the coloured speck of light was seen. Whiteness blazed in the sky. A parachute flare burnt with intolerable brilliance aloft. The beach was lighted for a long way. It was empty. The boomings circled and circled, but they could not land on water in darkness, with winds of unknown force and direction building up a very considerable sea.

The boomings went away in the darkness. And presently the

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rain came. He tried to use the rubber raft as a shelter for himself and the dog, but the wind took it away and tried to destroy it. The rain was utter saturation.

But the man stayed there, and therefore so did the dog. They huddled together in the sand hollow the man had dug. And Thornton thought hopefully about his wife and little daughter, Ella, while a minor cyclonic disturbance raged and roared, and tore leaves and branches from the jungle trees, and threw thunderous waves against the outer shores of this and other islands.

It was not a storm to be put on record. It blew and blew, but the coral-sand beach was sheltered. Besides, there was quite unreasonable reassurance in the coming of the search-and-rescue planes, even though they dare not land. The presence of the dog helped greatly.

Thornton allowed himself to become absorbed in thoughts of his family. He liked having and being part of his family. Waiting in the drowning rain with the hungry dog pressed close, it seemed very definite to Thornton that the three of them made up something so absolutely right that surely no harm could be allowed to come to any of them. What had happened to Thornton's ankle and his arm was trivial, though it hurt. Thornton thought about his wife and daughter and anticipated arrival via search-and-rescue at Tupuro. It would be very good.

The dog growled. He had raised his head some time since to listen, but he had done that often. This time he growled. His head turned towards the sea. After an instant he was up, turning his head this way and that. Now he faced the jungle and now the water. In the bay there was boiling surf, but the rain beat it down and destroyed its frothing.

Thornton very grimly prepared to do what he could. One arm was nearly useless, but not quite. He assigned it the duty of firing flares. The other hand could take care of the small pistol intended to give him a chance at game.

The dog snarled now in a raging indecision. So Thornton set off a flare. It went up, shining feebly in the rain. There was a dark mass deploying itself at the edge of the surf. It could move towards Thornton from that side. There were figures grouped at the jungle edge.

The flare went out. Thornton considered very coldly. This local lynching party would not be a war party. A war party is prepared to fight, expects to fight and has prepared itself psychologically for the taking of risks. The assassination of one man by persons who are faceless, either because they are masked or because they are so many, is another thing entirely. Assassins—

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unlike warriors—consider that they have made all the plans and scheduled all the events. A surprise move against would-be murderers is almost invariably successful.

Thornton crawled out of his hollow in the darkness. The mound of sand was nearly washed away anyhow. He crawled towards the jungle, towards that smaller, mustering group who prepared for Thornton's murder by the other group—and might very well anticipate the taking of all risks by them. The dog came with him. Singularly, the dog did not snarl or growl now. A dog acting under what he takes for orders keeps quiet.

He paced beside Thornton in the drowning rain. Thornton moved painfully and with difficulty, because he had only one good arm and one usable leg. He moved, indeed, with something of the absurdity of an inchworm. But he went across the beach towards the jungle and the intending murderers so that he would not be where they expected him.

He was halfway to them when they advanced. So they walked into him. The dog, with a roar, leapt upon a spear-armed man who'd have stumbled over Thornton in two paces more. Thornton pulled the trigger of the flare pistol. The flare did not travel far—not in this downpour—but he saw singularly inappropriate harsh reflections from wet naked bodies and wet barbed spears.

His little hunting pistol cracked and cracked. It was not important to disable anybody. It was important to hurt as many as possible. The dull and sodden downpour of the rain was louder than the surf or even the wind. But the howlings were louder than either. These murderers were the victims of surprise, and there was a ravening, raging big dog in their midst tearing at the flesh of those who would murder his master. They ran.

Once more before dawn the dog growled throatily at the then diminishing storm. And Thornton roused himself, but now with confidence, and nothing happened. Nothing. And thereafter the storm blew and the winds roared and changed their direction clockwise, as cyclonic winds should do in the southern hemisphere. When grey light came, there were still many high waves and many tumultuous gusts, and the sky was still covered with clouds. But Thornton could see for a long way above the water.

There was a carrier four miles out at sea, with a destroyer plunging violently near it. Hull-down at the horizon an oil tanker came limping valiantly towards this place. And as soon as it was conceivably light enough, low-flying, heavy search-and-

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rescue planes came winging barely above the waves from the direction of Tupuro. They swept on towards him, and roared above the island and then circled, as if exultant, over the spot where he managed to get himself upright on one leg to wave to them . . .

During the pick-up by the search-and-rescue plane the dog stayed desperately close to Thornton. He was frightened when the plane lurched and bumped on the seas that impeded the take-off for a time. Later, though he was friendly to the seaplane's crew, he would not go far from Thornton. He was Thornton's dog. That matter was settled.

It was settled until they reached Tupuro. But then they lifted Thornton to the ground, and his wife and little Ella were there to greet him. His wife showed the fear she had felt during all the night, but her eyes shone when she looked at him.

Thornton forgot the dog. He did not remember him again for almost a minute and a half. Then he heard a faint and somehow desperate whine. The dog looked at Thornton with imploring eyes. He shivered. He ignored small Ella, who petted him extravagantly. The dog was terrified, and it could only be fear that the master he had acquired on a coral-sand beach could forget him. He whimpered.

Then Thornton said gravely, "Excuse me, boy. This is my wife." And his wife put out her hand, and the dog sniffed it and licked it dutifully. "And this is my daughter Ella," said Thornton as gravely as before. "They are the rest of your family now. We belong together. All of us."

Ella hugged the dog with extravagant affection. She said blissfully, "How did you know exactly what kind of dog I wanted, Daddy?"

Later on, Thornton put things together in his mind. An order for a squadron of jet fighters to shift their base, and the death of a trader on one of the Bismarcks, and a fatigue crack in a metal pipe, and a short-lived cyclonic storm—they could all happen by accident. But once they had happened, other happenings must take place by necessity. And these other happenings . . .

He heard Ella giggle on the porch of his quarters on Tupuro. He thought that there could not be any sound quite so happy as the giggle of a six-year-old. He opened his mouth to say something to his wife. They were very glad to be together. But before he could speak he did hear a happier sound. It was a steady thump-thump-thump-thump. The big brown-and-white dog was wagging his tail as Ella played with him.

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To Whoo . . . m it may Concern

And nightly under the simple stars
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away
DYLAN THOMAS, *Fern Hill*

'Owler

Wart jumped for the sill and automatically gave himself an extra kick with his wings, just as a high jumper swings his arms. He landed on the sill with a thump, as owls are apt to do, did not stop himself in time, and toppled straight out of the window. " This," he thought to himself, cheerfully, " is where I break my neck." It was curious, but he was not taking life seriously. He felt the castle walls streaking past him, and the ground and the moat swimming up. He kicked with his wings, and the ground sank again, like water in a leaking well . . .

" For heaven's sake," panted Archimedes, bobbing in the dark air beside him, " stop flying like a woodpecker."

T. H. WHITE, *The Sword in the Stone*

Fowl Criticism

" I've studied owls
And other night fowls,
And I tell you
What I know to be true;
An owl cannot roost
With his limbs so unloosed;
No owl in the world
Ever had his claws curled,
Ever had his legs slanted,
Ever had his bill canted,
Ever had his neck screwed
Into that attitude."

J. T. FIELDS, *The Owl Critic*

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Witty and Wise

Once upon a starless midnight there was an owl who sat on the branch of an oak tree. Two ground moles tried to slip quietly by, unnoticed. "You!" said the owl. "Who?" they quavered, in fear and astonishment, for they could not believe it was possible for anyone to see them in that thick darkness. "You two!" said the owl. The moles hurried away and told the other creatures of the field and forest that the owl was the greatest and wisest of all animals because he could see in the dark and because he could answer any question. "I'll see about that," said a secretary bird, and he called on the owl one night when it was again very dark. "How many claws am I holding up?" said the secretary bird. "Two," said the owl, and that was right. "Can you give me another expression for 'That is to say' or 'namely'?" asked the secretary bird. "To wit," said the owl. "Why does a lover call on his love?" asked the secretary bird. "To woo," said the owl.

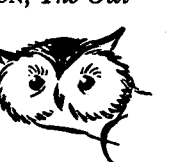
JAMES THURBER, *The Owl who was God*

Tuwhoonful

Thy tuwhits are lull'd I wot
Thy tuwhoos of yesternight,
Which upon the dark afloat,
So took echo with delight,
So took echo with delight,
That her voice untuneful grown
Wears all day a fainter tone.

I would mock thy chaunt anew;
But I cannot mimick it;
Not a whit of thy tuwhoo,
Thee to woo to thy tuwhit,
With a lengthened loud halloo
Tuwhoo, tuwhit, tuwhit, tuwhoo-o-o.

ALFRED TENNYSON, *The Owl*



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To Wit

" I want, I want "—along the vale
I heard a wandering mortal howl.
" What? what? what?" sang the nightingale.
" WHOM? " cried the owl.
GEORGE ROSTREVOR HAMILTON, *The Question*

Burrowing Babies

Then the last crust of earth gave way, and cascaded into the nesting chamber, and glaring up out of the gloomy hole were two little ash-grey faces with great dandelion-golden eyes. We all gave a whoop of triumph, and the owls blinked very rapidly and clicked their beaks like castanets. They looked so fluffy and adorable that I completely forgot all about owls' habits, and reached into the ruins of the nest-chamber and tried to pick one up. Immediately they transformed themselves from bewildered bundles consisting of soft plumage and great eyes to swollen, belligerent furies. Puffing out the feathers on their backs, so that they looked twice their real size, they opened their wings on each side of their bodies like feathered shields, and, with clutching talons and snapping beaks, swooped at my hand . . .

We returned to the estancia with a very satisfying bag of eight baby burrowing owls, who promptly proceeded to consume meat and beetles in such vast quantities that we began to wonder if their harassed parents would really miss them . . .

GERALD DURRELL, *The Drunken Forest*

Juliet has lost her little downy owl,
The bird she loved more than all other birds.
He was a darling bird, so white, so wise,
Like a monk hooded in a snowy cowl,
With sun-shy scholar's eyes;
He hooted softly in diminished thirds;
And when he asked for mice,
He took refusal with a silent pride—
And never pleaded twice.
He was a wondrous bird, as dignified
As any Diplomat
That ever sat
By the round table of a Conference.
He was delicious, lovable and soft.
He understood the meaning of the night,
And read the riddle of the smiling stars.
MAURICE BARING, *Elegy on the Death of Juliet's Owl*

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THE DAY

Robert watched her walk away down the path. Suddenly he shivered

BY DARRELL BATES

"IS THERE anything else you want?" the woman said, "before I go?"

The sun was setting over the jagged line of hills of the other island that lay to the west of Mos. The hills were a deep solid purple against the liquid gold and blue patterns of the evening sky.

Robert Carlew sat there at the open window but he didn't see the colours or the patterns in the sky, and he didn't hear the woman's words. His eyes were shut, and his ears too, to outside things. All his senses were turned inwards to catch the images and scents and sounds of a piece of memory. When he had them clear in his mind he opened his eyes and, pencil in hand, started to set them down in words on the paper that lay before him on the table. The words rhymed but not very often and in unexpected places. Robert Carlew was a poet.

The woman, hand on hips and with a dark scowl on her face, watched him from the doorway. She had thick eyebrows like a man and the dark eyes underneath had anger and a touch of scorn in them.

"I am going now," she said. "Is there nothing more?"

The man turned this time and looked at her.

"No," he said. "Nothing."

The woman shrugged her shoulders and put the black shawl that lay on them up over her head covering her hair, and then drew one end across until it covered her mouth like a veil. She turned quickly and went out of the door.

Her way to the village took her past the open window where Robert sat. She stopped below the window and looked at him over the veil of her shawl.

"Tomorrow," she said, "is the Day."

"The Day?" There was no sign of comprehension in Robert's face or eyes.

"Yes," she said, "the Day."

Impatient with his lack of understanding her eyes grew hard

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and she drew the shawl closer round her face and turned her head away. And then suddenly she turned again and faced him, and let the shawl slip away from her mouth; and her eyes, he saw, had softened. Not much but a little.

"You are a foreigner, I know. A poet. A man that goes out rarely and speaks little. But can it be true even so that you do not know about the Day?"

"I do not know," Robert said, "truly."

"Then I will tell you. It is right that you should know. Though a stranger and a poet, you are still a man, and you should know."

She came to the window's edge, and leaned her arms on the sill. The shawl fell away from them and revealed the strong brown flesh, slightly flecked with dark hair, and the warm smoothness of the skin. But Robert wasn't looking, and if he had been he wouldn't have noticed them.

The woman's face was always set in a severe unsmiling mould, and there were lines etched by sadness at the corners of her dark eyes and gentle mouth. The Sad One, they called her in the village. "Yes," she said, "it is the Day of the Women."

"Tell me about it," he said. It was six months now since, escaping from the confines and conventions of his own country, Robert had come to the island, but he didn't go out much or mix with people and he still wore the unfamiliar language like a new pair of shoes.

"Many, many years ago," the woman started, speaking slowly and using simple words, "there was a calamity here on this island of Mos. Some invaders came to revenge some ancient slight and they killed all the men on the island. The old men and the boys, even the babies if they were male were killed. All the male things were killed. The rams and the he-goats and the cocks and the boars were killed."

The woman paused and leaned her head on her arms that rested on the windowsill.

"What happened then?" Robert asked, but only out of politeness. He wanted to go on with his poem, which was about a rainy Sunday afternoon in Bradford.

"They went away. They did not touch the women or the girls, nor molest them in any way. They went away, leaving behind an island of women and hens and she-goats and sows."

Robert put down his pencil and looked out of the window. He was beginning despite himself to be interested. Seeing this the woman smiled, briefly and quickly, and then went on with her story.

"They expected that on their own the women would starve,

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or that if they did not starve the island race would, in any case, for lack of men and male things soon wither away and die. To make sure that the women did not escape or go out and seek help, the invaders destroyed all the boats on the island. At that time," she added, pointing to the jagged silhouette of land to the west, " that other island was uninhabited and bare.

" But the women did not starve. They suffered much hardship and hunger but they did in a fashion all the work that the men had done, and they managed to survive. And the invaders had forgotten one thing. Some of the women had had babies inside their bellies and some of the babies when they were born were boys. And it was the same with the hens and the she-goats and the sows.

" And so the people of Mos survived. Thanks," she added, " to the women."

" Ah," said Robert, who was beginning to understand.

" So, once a year, we celebrate this thing. With the Day of the Women. And tomorrow is that day."

" What happens," Robert asked, " on that day? " His mouth felt dry and he licked his lips, and the Sad One who rarely laughed or smiled, noticed this and the line of her mouth moved slightly like the curve of a small wave on a sandy beach.

" The women do the things the men do," she said, " and the men do the work of the women."

Robert knew well enough what the women of the island did. They cooked and scrubbed and washed. They tended the children, and they fed the animals. They tilled the fields and picked the olives. They worked all day. But what was it exactly, Robert wondered, that the men did? He couldn't remember, now that he came to think of it, ever seeing a Mos man do any work at all. They seemed to spend all their time in the cafés, drinking and laughing and playing a sort of guitar. And sometimes they would go down to the beach edge and look at the sea and throw pebbles that bounced five, six, seven times or more on the flat, placid water.

" In the old days," the woman explained, as if sensing his thoughts, " the men did three things. Three important things. They defended the island with spears and slings. They went out in boats and caught fish. And they—" She used a word that Robert didn't know, but one that was not difficult to guess.

" But now there are no enemies to attack the island. And there are no fish left in the sea. So the men do nothing, and they spend their time drinking and gossiping and singing songs and looking at the sea . . ."

Suddenly the woman took her arms away from the windowsill

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and drew her black shawl again over her head. " I am going now."

" Will you then," Robert asked, " not come tomorrow? "

" No," she said. " Do not forget to feed the cat and the little pig and the she-goat and the hens, and do not," she added, " leave anything undone. It is the custom, and all men who live on the island must obey it. Even," she added over her shoulder, " if you are a stranger and a poet."

Robert watched her walk away down the path to the village. Suddenly he shivered. He shut the window quickly against the cold that seemed somehow to have come into the room, and a touch of damp.

Robert was awakened next morning by the sun on his face. His tongue was dry and he wondered where the orange juice was that the Sad One brought him every morning. He would lie in bed sipping it, and watch the sun shining on the sea and think about the beautiful words he would use later in the day to describe the rain in Bradford. Then he would come down and there would be a fire in the grate and hot steaming coffee on the table and the rolls warm from the oven and the milk warm from the goat. But this morning when he came down the grate was empty, and there was no coffee, and no bread and no milk. Then he remembered . . .

He went out into the yard and collected some sticks. The wood was damp with the dew and it was a long time before there was any glow or warmth in the grate. He went to look for the goat but she was difficult to catch, and when he caught her and started to squeeze and cajole her teats the way he had seen the Sad One do, the milk squirted into his face and down his shirt. When he got back the coffee had boiled and spilt into the fire and nearly put it out.

It was after midday before Robert was able to sit at the table in the window and go on with his poem. He wrote a few lines. Then he scratched them out. He sat there with his eyes closed trying to focus the images he sought, but all he got was a series of spots in front of his eyes. He got up and looked at himself in the mirror. After the morning's difficulties he didn't even look like a poet. He left the table and went out for a walk.

The village was strangely unsilent. Usually after midday it was quiet and sleepy. The men would be lolling in their chairs outside the cafés with their eyes shut and their mouths open. Or they would be underneath an olive tree, asleep and snoring, and dreaming brave dreams of masculine prowess. But this time, Robert saw, there were no men about at all. Once in an upstairs room he caught sight of a husband beating out a small carpet on the windowsill, and again farther down the road there was a

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young man, a bachelor he knew, staggering under the weight of two pails of water suspended from a yoke.

He saw Robert and waved his hand and smiled.

" Where are you going, friend? " he asked.

" To nowhere," Robert said. " I just walk."

" Do not go into the square," the young man said. " Do not go there today."

" Why not? " From the direction of the square there came a buzz of sound. Of laughter and shouting and singing. " Why not? " he asked again.

The man shrugged his shoulders, and grimaced with the pain of it. He had forgotten he had the yoke and the pails of water. It was twelve months to the day since he had carried or lifted anything heavier than a glass of wine.

" Do not go! That is all I say. Do not go! "

But Robert walked on. It was curiosity that drove him on, rather than courage. Curiosity and ignorance, and the thought of the burden that his small happy whitewashed house had suddenly become. And perhaps, he said to himself, seeking reassurance as he approached the square, I can write a poem about it too.

The cafés in the square were full of women. Of thin, dry-skinned old women, and fat blowzy wives and slim dark-eyed girls. They wore skirts and blouses of green and scarlet and blue, and handkerchiefs on their heads, with coloured dragons on them and seahorses and curved gleaming dolphins. They leaned back in the chairs, their legs stretched out or cocked up on the wooden tables. Some were dancing, many were singing, and all, it seemed, had a glass or bottle in their hands.

" Look," Robert heard a woman say, " there is a man."

" It is the stranger," another said. " He does not count."

" But he is walking in the square. And on this day. It is an affront."

Everyone was looking at him now and he began to feel uneasy. And slowly from every side of the square groups and lines of women began to move towards him. Many were laughing still but some had set angry faces and hard flashing eyes. As they came closer and the tempo of their encircling became quicker Robert thought of the maypole they used to set up on fair days in the Derbyshire village where he was born. The maypole that had always seemed so bare and tall and lonely in the middle of the square, and the brightly-coloured streamers that circled round it held in the clinging pink hands of girls in fluffy frilly frocks of pink and blue and yellow, and how the streamers got intertwined and mingled until the bare, lonely pole was

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beribboned and enmeshed and tamed and utterly submerged . . .

Robert turned suddenly and ran. He had run from women all his life, from coloured ribbons and soft pink hands, but he ran faster now and with greater fear than he had ever run before. Soon he outdistanced them and reached the safety of his home. He locked the door behind him, and stood there panting and shaking with the exertion of his flight. He went across to the washbasin and was violently sick.

After nightfall the village became quieter. Robert went to the room upstairs and opened the window and leaned out to look. The lights had gone from the square, and the noise, and he could see groups of women, arms linked and singing softly, walking up the path. One by one they disengaged themselves from the groups and disappeared into doors and courtyards. Soon the village was silent and asleep.

Robert went down the stairs and into the square whitewashed room where he lived and ate and wrote. He was smiling with relief that the Day was nearly ended; that soon he would eat cooked food again, and drink orange juice in bed in the mornings while he watched the sun come up over the sea; that he would be able to write and evoke his images in peace; that the square would be itself once more, and the women safely ordered and contained by work and custom.

He did not see her at first. It was quite dark now, and the oil lamp and the glow of the fire made confusing shadows on the wall. She stood with her back to the door unmoving and watching him as she waited for his eyes to pick out the substance from the shadows.

" What do you want," he asked, " at this hour? "

She moved away from the door and crossed the room to the fire. " What have you eaten today? "

" I had some coffee," he said. " Then I had some bread, and fruit . . ."

Her eyes went over the room, taking in the dust and the disorder and the remains of the meal on the table.

" Have you swept the room? " Her voice was harsh, and hard with authority.

Robert said nothing, angered at the questions, and the tone of them, and yet unable to contest them.

" Or made the bed? Or fed the animals? "

With a quick, lithe movement she went across the room and with the back of her hand slapped Robert across the mouth. The colour drained out of his face, and the mark of her hand showed on the skin like a rash.

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She raised her hand again and Robert caught it by the wrist.

"Leave my hand," she said.

Robert stared into the face that was very close now to his own. He could smell the wine on her breath.

"Leave my hand," she said again. "It is the custom on this Day. That no man shall use his strength against a woman. Neither to strike nor to defend."

Robert let the hand go, and again she struck him across the mouth.

"Now I will make some coffee," the woman said. She went across to the fire, and added sticks to it until it flamed and the flames made vivid dancing shadows on the wall and on Robert's white anger-tightened face. While she waited for the coffee to boil she looked at the man, and he in turn looked at her. There was no gentleness in his eyes, or in hers, but there was an awareness that had not been there before, on this day or on any other.

"Why," he asked, "are you called the Sad One?"

"He died," she said, "two years after our wedding. Nine years ago, it was, almost to the day."

"Did you not marry again?"

She shook her head.

The coffee was boiling, and she poured a cup and gave it to him. His mouth was cut where she had hit him and he bit his lip against the hurt of the hot coffee on the torn flesh. She put her hand to touch his mouth. He recoiled from the touch and moved his arm to catch her wrist again.

"No," she said. "Neither to strike nor to defend."

She touched his mouth and his cheek with her fingers, and he shut his eyes and clenched his hands against the soft, female touch. But the hands were sure and firm, and slowly, unwillingly still, his hands unclenched and hung relaxed by his side, and his eyes opened and looked in the dark eyes that were very close now to his own.

"How did he die?" he asked.

"He was drunk. He fell from the cliff into the sea and was drowned."

"I am sorry."

She turned away from him and went to the table where the lamp was. She turned the lamp down until the only light in the room was the fire.

"Do not be sorry," she said. "It was I who killed him."

Her shadow on the wall grew as she moved towards him again, and grew until it seemed to fill the whole room. She started to unwind the coloured handkerchief from her head, and her shadow

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on the wall as she held the cloth outstretched in her hands behind her head was like a bird with wings.

" Why did you kill him? " Robert asked.

" Because he was a drunkard. And because he could not give me a child. . ."

She was standing close to him again, and she lifted her hands with the cloth still held between them and slipped it over his head and down over his body until it held him at the waist.

Suddenly an ember in the fire snapped with a quick crack of sound. A spurt of flame shot up, and a shower of sparks, and made the shadows dance for a moment like marionettes on the whitewashed wall. And then the fire died away, and it was quiet and dark and still in the small square room.

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STEVIE SMITH–poems

Pad, Pad

I always remember your beautiful flowers
And the beautiful kimono you wore
When you sat on the couch
With that tigerish crouch
And told me you loved me no more.

What I cannot remember is how I felt when you were unkind,
All I know is, if you were unkind now I should not mind.
Ah me, the power to feel exaggerated, angry and sad
The years have taken from me. Softly I go now, pad pad.

The Old Sweet Dove of Wiveton

'Twas the voice of the sweet dove
I heard him move
I heard him cry
Love, love.

High in the chestnut tree
Is the nest of the old dove
And there he sits solitary
Crying, Love, love.

The grey of this heavy day
Makes the green of the trees' leaves and the grass brighter
And the flowers of the chestnut tree whiter
And whiter the flowers of the high cow-parsley.

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STIFF UPPER LIP

I was vaguely aware that things were not as they should be

BY LAWRENCE DURRELL

AS FOR the Fair Sex (said Antrobus), I am no expert, old boy. I've always steered clear. Mind you, I've admired through binoculars as one might admire a fine pair of antlers. Nearest I ever came to being enmeshed was in the Folies Bergères one night. Fortunately, Sidney Trampelvis was there and got me out into the night air and fanned me with his cape until my head cleared and I realised the Full Enormity of what I'd done. Without realising it, I had proposed to a delightful little pair of antlers called Fifi and was proposing to take her back to the Embassy and force the Chaplain to gum us up together. Phew! I certainly owe Sidney a debt. We positively galloped away from the place in a horse-drawn contrivance with our opera hats crushed like puff-pastry. Sidney, who was only visiting, and who had also crossed the subliminal threshold and proposed—dear God—to a contortionist; Sidney was even paler than I. That night he dyed his hair green to escape identification and crossed over to Dover on the dusk packet—a bundle of nerves.

But Dovebasket in love was a strange sight. His sighs echoed through the Chancery. There were sonnets and triolets and things all over the backs of the War Office dispatches. The little winged youth had certainly pinked him through the spencer. Yes, it was Angela, Polk-Mowbray's niece. I can't think why Polk-Mowbray didn't liquidate one or both of them. But then the Popular Verdict on *him* was that he needed stiffening. Yes, the stiffest thing about him was perhaps his upper lip. As for Dovebasket, I would have described him as an ensanguined poop. A spoon, my dear chap, a mere spoon. Yet love makes no distinctions. Afterwards he published a little book of his poems called *Love Songs of an Assistant Military Attaché* with a preface by Havelock Ellis. A rum book in sooth. I remember one refrain: *The moon gleams up there like a cuspidor*

Angela, Angela, what are we waiting for?

You get the sort of stuff? Could lead directly to Nudism. It

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was clear from all this that he was terribly over-sexed and I for one felt that he would end in Botany Bay or the Conservative Central Office or somewhere. You see, Angela wouldn't respond to the rowel at all. Not her. Press his suit as firmly as he might the wretched chap only got the tip-tilted nose in response. It was clear that she considered him as no more than a worm-powder. And here I must add that we had all been worried about Angela, for she had been showing signs of getting one of her famous crushes on the Russian Military Attaché—Serge, or Tweed, or something by name—a bloater to boot. But of course, the worst aspect of it all was that we weren't officially fraternising at that time with The Other Bloc. Polk-Mowbray was worried about her security. He had been frightfully alarmed to overhear an idle conversation of hers with a Pole in which she gave away—without a moment's thought—the entire layout of Henley Regatta, every disposition, old boy. She even drew a map of the refreshment room. I know that Henley isn't Top Secret, but it might just as easily have been the dispositions of the Home Fleet. Such lightness of speech argued ill for the Mission. One simply did not know what she mightn't reveal in this way . . . We were concerned, I might say, Quite Concerned.

Well, it so fell out that during this fruitless romance of Dove-basket's the Vulgarians invited us all to join them in pushing out the boat for the Wine Industry. They had always had a Wine Industry, mind you, but it had never been put on a proper basis before. So, very wisely, they had imported a trio of French experts and turned them loose among the bins. Within a matter of a couple of years, the whole thing had been reorganised, new cultures had been sorted out, and Vulgaria was now about to launch about twenty new wines upon the export market. Advance intelligence from old Baron Hisse la Juppe, the Military Attaché (who had practically lived down there while experiments were going on) suggested that something most promising had taken place. Vulgaria, he said (rather precariously), was on the point of exporting wines which would equal anything the French and Italians could do . . . We were incredulous, of course, but were glad to assist in the send-off of the new wines. The whole Corps accepted the invitation to the Vin d'Honneur with alacrity.

The day dawned bright and fair, and it was a merry party of carefree dips who took the train north to the vineyards. The whole vieillesse dorée of diplomacy, old man. In sparkling trim. For once, the whole thing was admirably worked out; we were carried in vine-wreathed carriages to the great main cellars of the place—more like a railway tunnel than anything, where warm

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candlelight glowed upon twinkling glasses and white linen; where the music of minstrels sounded among the banks of flowers . . . I must say, I was transported by the beauty of the scene. There lay the banks of labelled bottles, snoozing softly upon the trestles with the candles shining upon their new names. Our hosts made speeches. We cheered. Then corks began to pop and the wine-tasting began. One of the French specialists led us round. He tried to get us to take the thing rather too professionally—you know, shuffling it about in the mouth, cocking the chin up to the ceiling, and then spitting out into a kind of stone draining-board. Well as you know, one is trained to do most things in the F.O. But not to spit out good wine. No. We simply wouldn't demean ourselves by this niggardly shuffling and spitting out. We swallowed. I think you would have done the same in our place. What we were given to taste, we tasted. But we put the stuff away.

And what stuff, my dear boy. Everything that Hisse la Juppe had said proved true. What wines! Wines to set dimples in the cheeks of the soul. Some were little demure white wines, skirts lifted just about the knee, as it were. Others just showed an elbow or an ankle. Others were as the flash of a nymph's thigh in the bracken. Wines in sables, wines in mink! What an achievement for the French! Some of the range of reds struck out all the deep bass organ-notes of passions—in cultured souls like ours.

It was ripping. We expanded. We beamed. Life seemed awfully jolly all of a sudden. We rained congratulations upon our hosts as we gradually wound along the great cellars, tasting and judging. What wines! I couldn't decide for myself, but after many trials fell upon a red wine with a very good nose. You see, we each had to pick one, as a free crate of it was to be given to each member of the Corps. Sort of Advertisement.

And as we went along the French specialist enchanted us by reading out from his card the descriptions of the wines which we were trying. What poetry! I must hand it to the French, though they tend to make me suspicious in lots of ways. There was one, for example, a sort of hock, which was described as " au fruité parfait, mais présentant encore une légère pointe de verdeur nullement désagréable." Another was described as " séveux et bien charpenté." And then there was a sort of Vulgarian Meursault which was " parfait de noblesse et de finesse, une petite splendeur." I must say, for a moment one almost succumbed to culture, old man. The stuff was damned good. Soon we were all as merry as tom-tits, and I even smiled by mistake at the Bulgarian Chargé. In fact everything would have gone off

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like a dream if Dovebasket hadn't cut up rough and sat deliberately on the air-conditioning.

Apparently in the middle of all this bonhomie the wretched youth crept up on Angela and breathed a winged word in her ear. It was the old fateful pattern. She turned on her heel and tossing up her little chin went over to the other corner where the crapulous Serge was swigging the least significant of the wines with much smacking of the lips. It was so obvious; Dovebasket was cut as if by a whiplash. A cry of fury broke from his lips to find that she preferred this revolting foreigner who had apparently been named after an inferior British export material; he banged his fist upon the nearest table and cried out, " If I cannot have her, nobody shall! " And all of a sudden made his way to the corner of the tunnel of love and sat down. He took a copy of Palgrave's Golden Brewery from his pocket—one of those anthologies with a monotonous-looking cover—and started to read in a huffy way. Sulks, old man, mortal sulks.

Well, we sighed and went on with our bibbing, unaware that the fellow was sitting upon our lifeline, as it were. I have already said that he was mechanically-minded. Apparently he had noticed that the air-supply to the tunnel came through a sort of sprocket with a side-valve cut in a sort of gasket with a remote-control intake—how does one say these things? Anyway. Dovebasket placed his behind firmly on the air-screw, thus cutting off our oxygen supply from the outer world. It was all very well trying to suffocate his rival. But—and such is the power of passion—he was determined to suffocate the entire Corps.

Well, for ages nobody noticed anything. On we went from cask to cask, in ever-growing merriment, getting more and more courtly, with each swig. We thought that Dovebasket was just alone and palely loitering, that he would grow out of it. We didn't know that he was sitting on the very H_2SO_4 or H_2O (I never was much good at chemistry) which nourished human life in these regions. I had never thought much about air before. Apparently there is something quite essential about it. Nutritious as wine is, it cannot apparently sustain life unaided. Well, as I say, there we were unaware of the formaldehyde bubbles which were slowly crawling up the bloodstream, mounting to our brains. Suddenly I noticed that everyone seemed unwontedly hilarious, a rather ghastly sort of hilarity, mind you. Laughter, talk, music—it all seemed to have gone into a new focus.

A grimly bacchanalian note set in. I was vaguely aware that things were not as they should be but I couldn't quite put my finger on it. The first to go was Gool, the British Council man. He lay down quietly in a bed of roses and passed out, only

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pausing to observe that he could feel the flowers growing over him. We ignored him. The music had got rather ragged at the edges. People were drinking on rather desperately now and talking louder than ever. Somewhere in the heart of it all there was a Marked Discomfort. People seemed suddenly to have aged, bent up. You could begin to see how they would look at ninety if they lived that long. The chiefs of mission had gone an ashen colour. As if they had worn their expressions almost down to the lining. It is hardly believable what a difference air can make to dips, old man.

And now it was that knees began to buckle, stays to creak, guy-ropes to give. Still, in courtly fashion, people began to look around them for something to lean on. Yes, people everywhere began to strap-hang, still talking and laughing, but somehow in a precarious way. Polk-Mowbray had gone a distinctly chalky colour and had difficulty in articulating; the Argentine Minister had quite frankly started to crawl towards the entrance on all fours.

It was Serge, I think, who first noticed the cause of our plight. With a bound he was at Dovebasket's side crying, " Please to remove posterior from the breathing," in quite good Satellite English. Dovebasket declined to do so. Serge pulled him and received a knee in the chest. Dovebasket settled himself firmly once more and showed clearly that he wasn't letting any more air in that week. Serge seized a wicker-covered bottle of the Chianti type and tapped him smartly on the crown. Dovebasket was not going to be treated like a breakfast egg by his hated rival. He dotted him back. This was fatal. One could see at once how wars break out. Poland and Rumania came to the Assistance of Serge, while Canada and Australia answered the call of the Mother Country. It looked like some strange Saturnalia, armed dips circling each other with wicker-covered bottles.

But as the fighting spread, Dovebasket got shifted from his perch and the life-giving H_2SO_4 began to pour once more into the cave. It was only just in time, I should say. The cellar now looked like a series of whimsical details from a Victorian canvas —I'm thinking of the " Kiss Me Hardy " with Nelson down for the count in the *Victory*'s cockpit. Some were kneeling in pleading postures. Some were crawling about in that painstaking way that beetles do when they are drunk on sugar-water. Others had simply keeled over among the flowers. The musicians drooped over their timbrels without enough oxygen between them for a trumpet-call or a groggy drum-tap. Then all of us, suddenly realising, set up a shout and hurled ourselves towards the life-distributing oxygen pump.

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With your permission I will draw a veil over the disgraceful scenes that ensued among the combatants. Dovebasket was knocked out. The Canadian Air Attaché had a collarbone bruised. The egregious Serge escaped unscathed. A number of bottles were broken. Such language. Life has its ugly side, I suppose. But the main thing was that the Corps lived again, breathed again, could hold up its aching head once more. But one is hardly trained to live dangerously.

Nevertheless, I noticed that not one dip failed to make a note of the wine of his choice. It would have been too much to miss that free crate. Some, in default of pencil and paper, had managed to scribble on their dickeys with lipstick. Polk-Mowbray, though beaten to his knees, nevertheless had the presence of mind to write Stella Polaris 1942 on his. Bloody, but relatively unbowed, you see.

And, as a matter of fact, after prayers the next day it was he who summed it all up rather neatly by saying, " And remember that in Peace, in War, in Love, and in Diplomacy one thing is needful. I do not, I think, need to tell you what that is."

He didn't. It would have been labouring the point. We knew only too well. The Stiff Upper Lip.

" Darling, think! What did you put in Daddy's glass that looked like port ? "

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BY RAY BRADBURY

PREHISTORIC PRODUCER

Brontosaur, stegosaur, triceratops—
the clumsy tonnages fell from his lips

HE OPENED a door on darkness. A voice cried, "Shut it!" It was like a blow in the face. He jumped through. The door banged. He cursed himself quietly. The voice, with dreadful patience, intoned, "Terwilliger?"

"Yes," said Terwilliger. A faint ghost of screen haunted the dark theatre wall to his right. To his left a cigarette wove fiery arcs in the air as someone's lips talked swiftly around it.

"You're five minutes late!"

Don't make it sound like five years, thought Terwilliger.

"Shove your film in the projection-room door. Let's *move*."

Terwilliger squinted. He made out five vast rubber-cushioned seats that exhaled, breathed heavily as amplitudes of executive life shifted and leaned towards the middle seat where, almost lost in darkness, a little boy sat smoking.

No, thought Terwilliger, *it's not a boy. That's him. Joe Clarence. Clarence the Great.*

For now the mouth snapped like a puppet's blowing smoke. "Well?"

Terwilliger stumbled back to hand the film to the projectionist, who winked at Terwilliger and slammed the booth door.

"Lord!" sighed the voice. A buzzer buzzed. "Roll it, projection!"

Terwilliger probed the nearest seat, struck flesh, pulled back, and stood biting his lips.

Music leapt from the screen. His film appeared in a storm of drums:

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TYRANNOSAURUS REX

THE TYRANT LIZARD

Photographed in stop-motion animation with miniatures created by John Terwilliger. A study in life-forms on Earth 100,000,000 years before Christ.

Faint ironic applause came softly patting from the baby hands in the middle seat.

Terwilliger shut his eyes. New music jerked him alert. The last titles faded into a world of primeval sun, mist, poisonous rain, and lush wilderness. Morning fogs were strewn along eternal seacoasts where immense flying dreams and dreams of nightmare scythed the wind. Huge triangles of bone and rancid skin, of diamond eye and crusted tooth, pterodactyls, the kites of destruction, plunged, struck prey, and skimmed away, meat and screams in their scissor mouths.

Terwilliger gazed, fascinated.

In the jungle foliage now, shiverings, creepings, insect jutterings, antennae twitchings; slime-locked in oily, fatted slime, armour-skinned to armour, in sun glade and shadow, moved the reptilian inhabitants of Terwilliger's mad remembrance of vengeance given flesh and panic taking wing.

Brontosaur—the thunder lizard—stegosaur, triceratops. How easily the clumsy tonnages of name fell from one's lips. The great brutes swung like ugly machineries of war and dissolution through moss ravines, crushing a thousand flowers at one footfall, snouting the mist, ripping the sky in half with one shriek.

My beauties, thought Terwilliger, *my little lovelies. All liquid latex, rubber sponge, ball-socketed and steel-jointed; all night-dreamed, clay-moulded, warped and welded, riveted and slapped to life by hand. No bigger than my fist, half of them; the rest no larger than this head they sprang from.*

"Good work," said a soft admiring voice in the dark.

Step by step, frame by frame of film, stop-motion by stop-motion, he, Terwilliger, had run his beasts through their postures, moved each a fraction of an inch, photographed them, moved them another hair, photographed them, for hours and days and months. Now these rare images, this scant eight hundred feet of film, rushed through the projector.

And lo! he thought. *I'll never get used to it. Look! They come alive!*

Rubber, steel, clay, reptilian latex sheath, glass eye, porcelain fang, all ambles, trundles, struts in terrible prides through continents as yet unmanned, by seas as yet unsalted, in years as yet unnumbered. They *do* breathe. They *do* smite air with thunders. Oh, uncanny!

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I feel, thought Terwilliger, *that there stands my garden, and these my animal creations which I love on this sixth day; and tomorrow, the seventh, I must rest.*

"Lord," said the soft voice again.

Terwilliger almost answered, "Yes?"

"This is beautiful footage, Mr. Clarence," the voice went on. "Incredible animation."

"I've seen better," said Clarence the Great.

Terwilliger stiffened. He turned from the screen where his friends lumbered into oblivion from butcheries wrought on architectural scales. He examined his possible employers.

"Beautiful stuff." This praise came from an old man who sat by himself far across the theatre, his head lifted forward in amazement towards that ancient life.

"It's jerky. Look there!" The strange boy in the centre fauteuil half rose, pointing with the cigarette in his mouth. "Hey, was *that* a bad shot. You see?"

"Yes," said the old man, fading back in his chair. "I see."

Terwilliger crammed his hotness down upon a suffocation of swiftly moving blood.

"Jerky," said Joe Clarence.

White light, quick numerals, darkness; the music cut, the monsters vanished.

"Glad that's over." Joe Clarence exhaled. "Throw on the next reel, Walter!... That's all, Terwilliger." Silence. "Terwilliger?" Silence. "Is that dumb bunny still here?"

"Here." Terwilliger ground his fists on his hips.

"Oh," said Joe Clarence, "it's not bad. But don't get ideas about money. A dozen guys came here yesterday to show stuff as good or better than yours, tests for our new film *Prehistoric Monster*. Leave your quotation in an envelope with my secretary. Same door out as you came in... Walter, what the hell you waiting for? Roll the next one!"

In darkness Terwilliger barked his shins on a chair, groped for and found the doorknob, gripped it tight, tight.

Behind him the screen exploded; an avalanche fell in great flourings of stone, whole cities of granite, immense edifices of marble piled, broke, and flooded down.

In this thunder he heard voices from the week ahead: "We'll pay you one thousand dollars, Terwilliger."

"But I need a thousand for my equipment alone!"

"Look, we're giving you a break. Take it or leave it!"

With the thunder dying, he knew he would take it. He knew he would hate it.

Only when the avalanche had drained off to silence behind

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him and his own blood had raced to the inevitable decision and stalled in his heart, did Terwilliger pull the immensely weighted door wide to step forth into the terrible raw light of day . . .

Fuse flexible spine to sinuous neck, pivot neck to death's-head skull, hinge jaw from hollow cheek, glue plastic sponge over lubricated skeleton, slip snake-pebbled skin over sponge, meld seams with fire, then rear upright triumphant in a world where insanity wakes but to look on madness—*Tyrannosaurus rex*!

The creator's hands glided down out of arc-light sun. They placed the granuled monster in false green summer wilds; they waded it in broths of teeming bacterial life. Planted in serene terror, the lizard machine basked. From the blind heavens the creator's voice hummed, vibrating the garden with the old and monotonous tune about the " footbone connected to the . . . anklebone, anklebone connected to the . . . legbone . . ."

A door burst wide open.

Joe Clarence ran in very like an entire pack of schoolboys. He looked wildly round as if no one were there. " Good lord! " he cried. " Aren't you set up yet? This costs me money! "

" No," said Terwilliger dryly. " No matter how much time I take, I get paid the same."

Joe Clarence approached in a series of quick starts and stops. " Well, shake a leg. And make it real horrible."

Terwilliger was on his knees beside the miniature jungle set. His eyes were on a straight level with his producer's as he said, " How many feet of blood and gore would you like? "

" Two thousand feet of each! " Clarence laughed in a kind of gasping stutter. " Let's look." He grabbed the lizard.

" Careful! "

" Careful? " Clarence turned the ugly beast in careless and nonloving hands. " It's my monster, ain't it? The contract—"

" The contract says you use this model for exploitation advertising, but the animal reverts to me after the film's release."

" No! " Clarence waved the monster. " That's wrong. We only signed the contract four days ago."

" It feels like four years." Terwilliger rubbed his eyes. " I've been up two nights without sleep, finishing this beast, so we can start shooting."

Clarence brushed this aside. " To hell with the contract. What a slimy trick! It's my monster. You and your agent give me heart attacks. Heart attacks about money, heart attacks about equipment, heart attacks about— "

" This camera you gave me is ancient."

" So if it breaks, fix it; you got hands? The challenge of the shoestring operation is using the old brain instead of cash.

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Getting back to the point. This monster—it should have been specified in the deal—is my baby."

"I never let anyone own the things I make," said Terwilliger honestly. "I put too much time and affection into them."

"Hell, O.K., so we give you fifty bucks extra for the beast and throw in all this camera equipment free when the film's done, right? Then you start your own company. Compete with me, get even with me, right, using my own machines!" Clarence laughed.

"If they don't fall apart first," observed Terwilliger.

"Another thing." Clarence put the creature on the floor and walked round it. "I don't like the way this monster shapes up."

"You don't like *what*!" Terwilliger almost yelled.

"His expression. Needs more fire, more goombah, more mazash!"

"Mazash!"

"The old bimbo! Bulb the eyes more. Flex the nostrils. Shine the teeth. Fork the tongue sharper. You can do it! Uh—the monster ain't mine, huh?"

"Mine." Terwilliger rose.

His belt buckle was now on a line with Joe Clarence's eyes. The producer stared at the bright buckle almost hypnotically for a moment. "Damn the damn lawyers!" he said and made for the door. "Work!"

The monster hit the door a split second after it slammed shut.

Terwilliger kept his hand poised in the air from his overarm throw. Then his shoulders sagged. He went to pick up his beauty. He twisted off its head, skinned the latex flesh off the skull, placed the skull on a pedestal and painstakingly with clay began to reshape the prehistoric face.

"A little goombah," he muttered. "A touch of mazash."

They ran the first film test on the animated monster a week later. When it was over, Clarence sat in darkness and nodded imperceptibly.

"Better. But more horrific, bloodcurdling. Let's scare the hell out of Aunt Jane. Back to the drawing-board!"

"I'm a week behind schedule now," Terwilliger protested. "You keep coming in. Change this, change that, you say, so I change it. One day the tail's all wrong, next day it's the claws."

"You'll find a way to make me happy," said Clarence. "Get in there and fight the old aesthetic fight!"

At the end of the month they ran the second test.

"A near miss! Close!" said Clarence. "The face is almost right. Try again, Terwilliger!"

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Terwilliger went back. He animated the dinosaur's mouth so it said obscene things which only a lip reader might catch, while the rest of the audience thought the beast was only shrieking. Then he got the clay and worked until three a.m. on the awful face . . .

"That's it!" cried Clarence in the projection room the next week. "Perfect! Now *that's* what I call a monster!"

He leaned towards the old lawyer Mr. Glass, and Maury, his production assistant. "You *like* my creature?" he beamed.

Terwilliger, slumped in the back row, his skeleton as long as the monsters he built, could feel the old lawyer shrug.

"You seen one monster, you seen 'em all."

"Sure, sure, but this one's special!" shouted Clarence happily. "Even *I* have got to admit Terwilliger's a genius!"

They all turned back to watch the beast on the screen, in a titanic waltz, throw its huge tail wide in a vicious harvesting that cut grass and clipped flowers. The beast paused now to gaze pensively into mists.

"That monster," said Mr. Glass at last, squinting. "He sure looks familiar."

"Familiar?" Terwilliger stirred, alert.

"It's got such a look," drawled Mr. Glass in the dark, "I couldn't forget, from some place."

"Natural history museum exhibits?"

"No, no."

"Maybe," laughed Clarence, "you read a book once, Glass?"

"Funny." Glass, unperturbed, cocked his head, closed one eye. "Like detectives, I don't forget a face. But, that *Tyrannosaurus rex*—where before did I meet *him*?"

"Who cares?" Clarence said. "He's great. And all because I booted Terwilliger's behind to make him do it right . . . Come on, Maury!"

When the door shut, Mr. Glass turned to gaze steadily at Terwilliger. Not taking his eyes away, he called softly to the projectionist. "Walt? Walter? Could you favour us with that beast again?"

"Sure thing."

Terwilliger shifted uncomfortably, aware of some bleak force gathering in the night room, in the sharp light that shot forth once more to ricochet terror off the screen.

"Yeah. Sure," mused Mr. Glass. "I almost remember. I almost know him. But . . . *who*?"

The brute, as if answering, turned and for a disdainful moment stared across 100,000,000 years at two small men hidden in a small dark room. The tyrant machine named itself in thunder.

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Mr. Glass quickened forward, as if to cup his ear.

Darkness swallowed all . . .

With the film half finished, in the tenth week, Clarence summoned thirty of the office staff, technicians, and a few friends to see a rough cut of the picture.

The film had been running fifteen minutes when a gasp ran through the small audience. Clarence glanced swiftly about. Mr. Glass, next to him stiffened.

Terwilliger, scenting danger, lingered near the exit, not knowing why; his nervousness was compulsive and intuitive. Hand on the door, he watched.

Another gasp ran through the crowd.

Someone laughed quietly. A secretary giggled. Then there was instantaneous silence. Joe Clarence had jumped to his feet. His tiny figure sliced across the light on the screen. For a moment three images gesticulated in the dark: *Tyrannosaurus*, menacing a triceratops, and Clarence, yelling, jumping forward as if to grapple with these fantastic wrestlers.

"Stop! Freeze it right there!"

The film stopped. The image held.

"What's wrong?" asked Mr. Glass.

"Wrong?" Clarence crept up on the image. He thrust his baby hand to the screen, stabbed the tyrant jaw, the lizard eye, the fangs, the brow, then turned blindly to the projector light so reptilian flesh was printed on his furious cheeks. "What goes on! What *is* this?"

"Only a monster, chief."

"Monster, hell!" Clarence pounded the screen with his tiny fist. "That's *me*!"

Half the people leaned forward, half the people fell back; two people jumped up, one of them Mr. Glass, who fumbled for his other spectacles, flexed his eyes and moaned, "So that's where I saw him before!"

"That's where you what?" cried Clarence.

Mr. Glass shook his head, eyes shut. "That face, I knew it was familiar."

A wind blew in the room. Everyone turned. The door stood open. Terwilliger was gone . . .

They found Terwilliger in his animation studio cleaning out his desk, dumping everything into a large cardboard box, the *Tyrannosaurus* model under his arm. He looked up as the mob swirled in, Clarence at the head.

"What did I do to deserve this?" Joe Clarence cried.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Clarence."

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"*You're* sorry? Didn't I pay you well?"

"No, as a matter of fact—"

"I took you to lunches—"

"Once. I picked up the bill."

"I gave you dinner at home, you swam in my pool, and now this! You're fired!"

"You can't fire me, Mr. Clarence. I've worked the last week free and overtime. You forgot my cheque."

"You're fired anyway. Oh, you're really fired! You're blackballed in Hollywood. Mr. Glass!" He whirled to find the old man. "Sue him!"

"There is nothing," said Terwilliger, not looking up any more, just looking down, packing, keeping in motion, "you can sue me for. Money? You never paid enough to save on. A house? Could never afford that. A wife? I've worked for people like you all my life. So wives are out. I'm an unencumbered man. There's nothing you can do to me. If you take my dinosaurs, I'll just go hole up in a small town somewhere, get me a can of latex rubber, some clay from the river, some old steel pipe, and make new monsters. I'll buy stock film raw and cheap. I've got an old worn-out stop-motion camera. Take that away, and I'll build one with my own hands. I can do anything. And that's why you'll never hurt me again."

"You're fired!" cried Clarence. "Look at me. Don't look away. You're fired! You're fired!"

"Mr. Clarence," said Mr. Glass quietly, edging forward. "Let me talk to him just a moment."

"Talk to him!" said Clarence. "What's the use? He just stands there with that monster under his arm, and the goddam thing looks like me, so get out of the way!"

Clarence stormed out of the door. The others followed.

Mr. Glass shut the door, walked over to the window and looked out at the absolutely clear twilight sky.

"I wish it would rain," he said. "That's one thing about California I can't forgive. It never really lets go when it should. Right now, what wouldn't I give for a little something from that sky? A bolt of lightning even."

He stood silent, and Terwilliger slowed in his packing. Mr. Glass sagged down into a chair and doodled on a pad with a pencil, talking sadly, half aloud, to himself.

"Six reels of film shot, pretty good reels, half the film done, 300,000 dollars down the drain, hail and farewell. Out of the window all the jobs. Who feeds the starving mouths of boys and girls? Who will face the stockholders? Anyone for Russian roulette?"

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He turned to watch Terwilliger snap the locks on a briefcase.

"What hath God wrought?"

Terwilliger, looking down at his hands, turning them over to examine their texture, said, "I didn't know I was doing it, I swear. It came out in my fingers. It was all subconscious. My fingers do everything for me. They did this."

"Better the fingers had come in my office and taken me direct by the throat," said Glass.

"Don't make me feel any guiltier than I feel," said Terwilliger.

"Do you want me to take you dancing?"

"It's just," cried Terwilliger. "He kept at me. Do this. Do that. Do it the other way. Turn it inside out, upside down, he said. I swallowed my bile. I was angry. Without knowing, I must've changed the face. But right up till five minutes ago, when Mr. Clarence yelled, I didn't see it. I take all the blame."

"No," sighed Mr. Glass, "we should all have seen. Maybe we did and couldn't admit. Maybe we did and laughed all night in our sleep, when we couldn't hear. So where are we now? Mr. Clarence, he's got investments he can't throw away. You got your career from this day forward, for better or worse, you can't throw it up. Mr. Clarence right now is aching to be convinced it was all some horrible dream. Part of his ache—99 per cent—is in his wallet. If you could put in one per cent of your time in the next hour convincing him of what I'm going to tell you next, tomorrow morning there will be no orphan children staring out of the want ads. If you would go tell him—"

"Tell me what?" Joe Clarence, returned, stood in the door, his cheeks still inflamed.

"What he just told me." Mr. Glass turned calmly. "A touching story."

"I'm listening!" said Clarence.

"Mr. Clarence—" the old lawyer weighed his words carefully —"this film you just saw is Mr. Terwilliger's solemn and silent tribute to you."

"It's *what*?" shouted Clarence.

Both men, Clarence and Terwilliger, dropped their jaws.

The old lawyer gazed only at the wall and in a shy voice said, "Shall I go on?"

The animator closed his jaw. "If you want to."

"This film—" the lawyer rose and pointed towards the projection room—"was done from a feeling of honour and friendship for you, Joe Clarence. Behind your desk, an unsung hero of the motion-picture industry, unknown, unseen, you sweat out your lonely little life while who gets the glory? The stars. How often does a man in Atawanda Springs, Idaho, tell his wife, 'Say,

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I was thinking the other night about Joe Clarence. A great producer, that man.' How often? Should I tell? Never! So Terwilliger brooded. How could he present the real Clarence to the world? The dinosaur is there: boom! It hits him! This is it! he thought, the very thing to strike terror to the world. Here's a lonely, proud, wonderful, awful symbol of independence, power, strength, shrewd animal cunning, the true democrat, the individual brought to its peak, all thunder and big lightning. Dinosaur: Joe Clarence. Joe Clarence: dinosaur, man embodied in tyrant lizard!"

Mr. Glass sat down, panting quietly. Terwilliger said nothing.

Clarence moved at last, walked across the room, circled Glass slowly, then came to stand in front of Terwilliger, his face pale. His eyes were uneasy, shifting up along Terwilliger's tall skeleton.

"You said that?" he asked faintly.

Terwilliger swallowed.

"To me he said it. He's shy," said Mr. Glass. "You ever hear him say much, ever, talk back, swear? Anything? He likes people, he can't say it. But immortalise them? That he can do!"

"Immortalise?" said Clarence.

"What else?" said the old man. "Like a statue, only moving. Years from now, people will say, 'Remember that film, *The Monster from the Mesozoic*?' And people will say, 'Sure! Why?' 'Because,' the others say, 'it was the one monster, the one brute in all Hollywood history that had real guts, real personality.' And why is this? Because one genius had enough imagination to base the creature on a real-life, hard-hitting, fast-thinking businessman of A1 calibre. You're one with history, Mr. Clarence. Film libraries will carry you in good supply. Cinema societies will ask for you. How lucky can you get? Nothing like this will ever happen to Glass, a lawyer. Every day for the next two hundred, maybe five hundred years, you'll be starring somewhere in the world!"

"*Every* day?" asked Clarence softly. "For the next—"

"Eight hundred even; why not?"

"I never thought of that."

"Think of it."

Clarence walked over to the window and looked out at the Hollywood hills and nodded at last.

"Terwilliger," he said. "You really like me *that* much?"

"It's hard to put into words," said Terwilliger with difficulty.

"So do we finish the mighty spectacle?" asked Glass. "Starring the tyrant terror striding the earth and making all quake before him, none other than Mr. Joseph J. Clarence?"

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"Yeah. Sure." Clarence wandered off, stunned, to the door, where he said, "You know? I always wanted to be an actor." Then he went quietly out into the hall and shut the door.

Terwilliger and Glass collided at the desk, both clawing at a drawer. "Age before beauty," said the lawyer and pulled forth a bottle of whisky.

At midnight on the night of the first preview of *Monster from the Mesozoic*, Mr. Glass came back to the studio, where everyone was gathering for a celebration, and found Terwilliger seated alone in his office, his dinosaur in his lap.

"You weren't there?" asked Mr. Glass.

"I couldn't face it. Was there a riot?"

"A riot? The preview notices are all super dandy extra plus! A lovelier monster nobody saw before! So now we're talking sequels! Joe Clarence as the tyrant lizard in *Return of the Mesozoic Monster*, Joe Clarence and/or Tyrannosaurus rex in maybe *Beast from the Old Country*."

The phone rang. Terwilliger got it.

"Terwilliger, this is Clarence! Be there in five minutes! We've done it! Your animal! Great! Is he mine now? I mean to hell with the contract. As a favour can I have him for the mantelpiece?"

"Mr. Clarence, the monster's yours."

"Better than an Oscar! So long!"

Terwilliger stared at the dead phone.

"'God bless us every one!' said Tiny Tim. He's laughing, almost hysterical with relief."

"So maybe I know why," said Mr. Glass. "A little girl, after the preview asked him for an autograph."

"An autograph?"

"Right there in the street. Made him sign. First autograph he ever gave in his life. He laughed all the while he wrote his name. Somebody *knew* him. There he was, in front of the theatre, big as life, Rex himself, so sign the name. So he did."

"Wait a minute," said Terwilliger, pouring drinks. "That little girl—"

"My youngest daughter," said Glass. "So who knows? And who will tell?"

They drank.

"Not me," said Terwilliger.

Then, carrying the rubber dinosaur between them and bringing the whisky, they went to stand by the studio gate waiting for the limousines to arrive all lights, horns, and annunciations.

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FIENDISH LUCK

by Brian Cleeve

THE Devil sat fishing by the Styx in the worst of tempers. Dirty oily water sliding past him and not a screed of grass on the bank to have his picnic on.

"Damn the day I took up fishing," he said, and gave his line a jerk that near broke it. The soul of a pawnbroker came up dripping, all claws and shell and eyes on stalks, and the Devil added it to the pile of scutty little crabs and crayfish that was already in his basket.

"What wouldn't I give for a salmon now," the Devil said through his teeth. "A spring-run salmon, with the strength in it to take a mayfly three feet above the water and bend a greenheart rod into a hoop." He ground his teeth together and little sparks flew out.

"A greenheart rod! Look at this thing! Look at the like of what I have to fish with!" And he held out his own rod and shook it fearfully at his ghillie, Belfagor.

"A curtain rod! And not a damn bit of nylon line from here to Hell's Gate."

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Tall, sardonic, Irish as they come, Brian Cleeve's humour flickers through his writing like the sun on Shannon water. Like all good Irishmen, he's a man of many ambitions. About three years ago, he had the short-story writer's usual itch to write a novel. It became a spy story—but nobody was enthusiastic. "Eventually," he told us, "I threw it into the dustbin. Ten minutes later, hearing the dustmen coming, I felt I couldn't let my brainchild die without one more effort and I fished it out and sent it away again." A wise decision. Assignment to Vengeance was not only published, it became a Thriller Book Club Book of the Month, went into paperback, and was translated into French. Death of a Painted Lady, a murder set in Dublin, was equally successful, and a cottage in Dublin is where he now lives, works—and savours success.

"It melts," said Belfagor timidly, trying to make himself small-small on the bank.

"Damn and blast, don't I know it melts," screamed the Devil. "Haven't I half the scientists down there trying to invent nylon that doesn't melt?" He stood up and gave his basket a terrible kick, scattering the pawnbrokers, theatre managers, newspaper editors, and television comedians into the Styx again. "Get me a salmon," the Devil roared at his unfortunate servant. "Get me the thirty-pound soul of an Irish Christian th t can leap a six-foot fall and him fasting . . ."

"My Lord!" screeched Belfagor imploringly.

"And a greenheart rod to fish him with," the Devil swept on. "And—and, mark me, a seven-pound nylon line blessed by a priest that'll let me play him till Doomsday without melting."

"Not—not—an Irishman!" pleaded Belfagor.

The Devil grinned horribly, threading the little wiggly soul of a journalist on to his hook. "Not only an Irishman, but a Kerryman, taken with blasphemy and damnation in his jaws in the instant of death."

"Kerry?" whimpered Belfagor. "I'll go to Dublin! I'll go to Cork! I'll even go to Belfast! But not the Kingdom, not Kerry." And he fell on his face and covered his black head with his black wings and cried like a child.

"Kerry!" said the Devil triumphantly. "Oh, the trout streams! Oh, the inlets from the sea and the salmon coming, and the straps of girls with their shawls and baskets, and the lads with the dynamite. Those were the days!" And he wiped a tear from his leather cheek and came within a wing-tip's brush of feeling remorse.

He dangled his hook over Belfagor's big, flappy ear and caught

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the lobe of it. " Up with you," he commanded, " up and off with you and be back here in ten minutes! " (although by this of course he meant ten Hell's minutes, which are somewhat longer than ours). And with a flick of his powerful wrist and the hiss of the reel he sent Belfagor flying from Eternity to Killara parish in the heart of Kerry.

In that same parish Father John McCarthy lay in bed, deeply troubled in his body with old age and rheumatism, and more troubled still in his soul with many things. He was troubled first by the nearness of death which for many weeks now he had felt like a coldness in the room that no fire would heat.

" For I am quite unworthy to die," the poor old man whispered to himself in the darkness of the night, and thought with terror and contrition of his many vanities and many lapses over his sixty years of ministry. He thought of the fierce pride he had taken in the parish hurling team, and the fierce joy he had felt as he lifted a glittering rainbow trout from the willow pool above the presbytery, or fought a salmon down the length of the stream to the Colonel's boundary.

" And beyond, God help me! " the old man whispered, remembering times he had poached half a mile deep into the Colonel's preserves. " And he a Protestant! "

He crossed himself and prayed that Saint Peter might intercede for him, for wasn't he a fisherman? But even as he prayed he doubted whether it was allowable.

Morning came to him before he slept, and brought him his other troubles, two and three together. Mrs. Hegarty with her asthma, rattling the worn curtains back on their hooks to let in the sight of a sky like grey slate. He knew from the set of her white bun at the back of her head, as stiff as a stale loaf, that she had words to say to him. She turned and faced him, folding her hands in her apron.

" It's the dinner," she said. " If there are to be the four of you, I have to have help," and she sniffed severely.

" Aye," said Father John weakly. The one woman in the parish who could darken his eye was Mrs. Hegarty, and she had to be his housekeeper! Well, maybe it would be held to him when—when the time came. " Get in young Sheila, surely."

" Her! " said Mrs. Hegarty, outraged. " My granddaughter? With that scamp of a boy Jack that you let disgrace the presbytery making dog's eyes at her and she in her apron? I'm a poor woman, Father, and little thought of by you or any, I know that! But I have my pride, I have my standards! "

" Aye, aye," said Father John very quickly, " you have, you

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have indeed, and how can you say you're not well thought of?" He hunted in his tormented old mind for a way out. "Maybe we could send Jack off—"

"Off entirely?" said Mrs. Hegarty eagerly, for she had a nephew that she would dearly have liked to see in Jack's place as handyman to the presbytery.

"For the day," said Father John, summoning his strength, what little was left to him. "Send him up to me."

He lay back on the pillows when she was gone, thinking wearily of the problems that the day was bringing to him. The dinner first. The Colonel was coming, being still the big landowner of the place and Father John's dearest friend and most quarrelsome enemy for longer than either of them could remember. And the schoolmaster, Hugh Byrne, county councillor, local pillar of the athletic association. He would be the real judge at the dinner. And then Father Finn, who was to be judged. For it was Father John's dearest wish that when he died Father Finn should become parish priest in his place. The Bishop would make the decision, but the Bishop lived far away, and would largely make it on Father John's solemn recommendation.

"Let me know if you want him to come after you, John," the Bishop had said a month ago on his Visitation. And for thirty days the necessity of deciding had been one more torment in the old priest's mind. So much to hang on his light word. The future of a parish. The future of a priest. God guide me, he had prayed. But no direct guidance came, and so he had thought of the dinner. All four of them already knew each other well. But let them dine together, drink and smoke and gossip together into the small hours, and maybe some new factor would develop so that he could judge. Maybe Hugh Byrne would take more kindly to Father Finn. For that was the crux of it.

If it was left to his own wish, Father Finn would be the man. But his own wish was poorly based and badly biased, and he knew it. For if ever a man was cut out not to be parish priest of Killara, Father Finn was he. A chess player, a poet, a singer of songs that a good Kerry priest shouldn't even know, let alone sing at the top of his voice; a fisherman with a ruthless disregard for boundaries and preserves and close seasons. A man who thought that Hugh Byrne was a fat hypocrite and had said so in public.

"May God forgive him," Father John prayed. "And me for agreeing in secret." For Mr. Hugh Byrne was that necessity of a parish, its lay conscience. And besides that its greatest pillar and support. No sodality, no activity was complete without his bald shining head and his rimless pince-nez. And a parish

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priest who didn't get on with Mr. Byrne was doomed to frustration from the start.

"It'll have to be an outsider," groaned Father John. "I couldn't in conscience recommend anything else." Unless at the dinner he could make them friends. Although it was hard to see how anything that Mrs. Hegarty knew how to cook could bring that about.

And so the worry went round and round in the old priest's skull, until Jack Ryan the handyman came to him, slipping in like a fox after a pheasant, one black curly lock of hair falling down to hide a wicked, innocent-seeming eye. Oh, the Devil's own whelp of a fox Jack Ryan, the heart-scald of his mother, of Sheila Hegarty, and of poor Father John, who had stood between him and more harm than any man should need protection from.

"It's a fine day," said Father John.

"It is, God bless it," said Jack, as meek as an acolyte.

"You don't want to be killing yourself with work on a day like this," said Father John. "Would you not like a little holiday to yourself?"

"To go fishing, Father?" And he slid a reel out of his pocket. "To fetch home a salmon maybe for the dinner tonight?"

"God forbid," said Father John piously, for it wasn't the season, and there'd be no salmon anywhere in the parish except in the Colonel's waters, if there. "But a trout now, you might take a trout up above . . ." And he held out his old, crippled hands for the reel and cradled it, thinking of many an autumn morning, and him further from death than he was now. "Go off with you now, enjoy yourself. And be good," he added anxiously. But Jack was already gone, and halfway down the path.

My love is like a white white rose,
And whiter there than where she shows,

he was singing, tipping his forelock to Mrs. Hegarty, glowering at him from the kitchen window.

The Devil take him, the old lady thought, and hoped that he wouldn't meet her granddaughter on the road up, for she'd sent for her already. But the wish had hardly flown from her when it was denied. For Jack was barely halfway to the place where he'd turn off the road when he saw Sheila coming, tall and light-footed, and swinging a basket with her apron and a sober dress in it, fit to wear when waiting on two priests and the Colonel and the schoolmaster.

He waited for her, leaning against a dry-stone wall, his rod beside him. "The morning is made for me," he said.

"Is it?" said Sheila, and blushed the length of her neck to her

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forehead. Her hair was so dark red that it looked black except in sunlight, and her eyes green, and her skin as white as Jack sang of it. "Why aren't you working?"

"I have the day off," said Jack. "Wouldn't you share it with me? We could have great sport—fishing," he added, before she could get angry.

"You're wicked," said Sheila, sorely tempted.

"Would you have me any other way?" Jack said, and captured her hand that lay alongside his on the low wall.

"Let me go," she whispered, "there's Father Finn! Oh, merciful heavens, he'll tell my grandmother—"

"The Devil take him," said Jack, who'd had it in mind to capture more than her hand if he'd been given another minute or two. "The Devil run off with him, and your grandmother."

"Jack!" cried Sheila, and tore her hand away and off with her up the road as fast as virtue would carry her. Which wasn't so fast as to prevent a backward glance at the turn. But by then Jack was already greeting Father Finn and had no eyes for her.

"What do I care if he looks after me or not?" Sheila asked herself as she went up the Presbytery path. But either that or something left her a little restless all the morning, and needing to be told twice about everything that should be done.

"What ails you, girl?" Mrs. Hegarty shouted at her, the second time she burnt the milk. "Are your wits astray?"

If they were, they'd have found Jack in good company, Father Finn's no less. For between one thing and another it wasn't ten minutes before the pair of them were making their soft way into the Colonel's land and preserves, Father Finn whistling *Pedro the Fisherman* very gently under his breath, his fair hair tousled as a thrush's feathers after a dust bath, brambles tearing at his old black suit, and Jack's greenheart rod in his hand.

"D'you think we'll rise anything?" he whispered to Jack between verses.

"We'll rise the Colonel himself if you don't quit whistling, Father," said Jack, for when it came to poaching he was the boss, and let Father Finn confess him after. The priest could be the boss then. And the pair of them went on as softly as two shadows towards a pool where Jack had heard there was a salmon at this time last year, and who could tell he might not be there again?

But softly as they went, they weren't soft enough to avoid the eye of Mr. Hugh Byrne, cruising the bounds of the parish on his well-oiled bicycle, looking for truants. A big, heavy man, who might have been a policeman if he hadn't been a teacher; a terror to truants and small children stuck over their arithmetic; red-faced, black-haired, and shaven so close you'd think he

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hated his whiskers. As he topped the brow of a hill didn't he see the tails of Jack and Father Finn disappearing into a thicket on the Colonel's land, and the top of a rod sticking up above Father Finn's shoulder?

"Ah!" said Mr. Byrne. "I have him! I have him at last!" For he well knew that Father John was hoping against reason and right to be able to recommend Father Finn to the Bishop. But it would be beyond even Father John to recommend a convicted poacher to become a parish priest. And so with the happy feeling that comes only to those who know they are combating sin, Hugh Byrne leaned his bicycle against a tree, vaulted the low wall into a field where cows were grazing, and set off across country and downhill towards the Colonel's river.

"Oh, wait till I get him!" he crowed, rubbing large horny hands together. "I'll roast and boil him, I'll have him defrocked." For there was a long history of passages at arms to be avenged, over and above the reference to a fat hypocrite. He's had the parish ruined, Mr. Byrne thought savagely, but here's an end to it, the Devil take him.

And didn't he say this at the very moment that our brave Belfagor was flying overhead, curving down into Kerry?

There's a fine, hopeful sign for me, Belfagor thought, for he'd already seen Father Finn on his nefarious business, and now he heard what Mr. Hugh Byrne wished for him. "If I don't have that thin, tousled, untidy disgrace of a Kerry curate for my Master to fish with inside this morning, my name's not Belfagor," he said, and landed neatly on the road beside the schoolmaster's bicycle.

Looking around to see that he wasn't observed, he folded his wings, put them inside his travelling-case, and took out his disguise. Within two minutes he was a fine, handsome-looking English tourist, in knickerbockers and a Norfolk jacket, with an old tweed fishing-hat on his silvery head, and a Guards' Brigade tie. Next he tucked his travelling-case under a convenient bush, looked around him to make sure he was alone, and jumped on the bicycle.

At the bottom of the hill he propped the bicycle against the hedge, opened the gate, and marched up to the kitchen window where he saw Sheila Hegarty kneading dough, a faraway look in her eyes.

"Excuse me, young woman," he said, in the most polished and beautiful accent that Sheila had ever heard, "the schoolmaster that I just met by the road asked me to leave his bicycle back here—" not a blink on him with such lies—"and told me

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that in return you might possibly be kind enough to conduct me to my old friend Colonel Morrison who lives near by?" (Which wasn't quite such a lie, for the Colonel being both Church of Ireland and a hearty tippler was naturally well known in His Majesty's Dominions.)

"Well, I don't know, sir," Sheila said, feeling a strange kind of shiver in her as she looked at the stranger's eyes. A queer yellow colour not going at all with his nice-old-gentleman exterior.

"Get along with you, girl," said Mrs. Hegarty from by the stove, who had overheard, and was very taken with the stranger's appearance. "I'd take you myself, sir, only I'm in the middle of making this sauce and daren't leave it."

So off with Sheila's white apron, and out with her on to the road, to trot along by the stranger to Colonel Morrison's. And a very fine conversationalist she found him. With a surprising knowledge of the ups and downs of parish life, and the boredoms of having nowhere but one dance hall within ten miles to take the edge off your energy. The quarter mile to the Big House flew by like a yard, and there was Colonel Morrison taking the morning air on his front steps, and practising mashie-niblick shots with his blackthorn stick.

"You can leave me now, girl," said Belfagor quite sharply, for he hadn't counted on finding the Colonel in full view like that, and he didn't want Sheila to see that the Colonel didn't know him at all, after the lie he'd told. "Off with you back to the kitchen, or I'll be blamed for keeping you." And he strode on, holding out his hand towards the Colonel.

But it so happened that Sheila was in no hurry to be back working, and lingered to watch how two such gentlemen would greet each other. And of course, they didn't greet each other at all. Or at least the Colonel didn't.

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"Colonel Morrison?" said Belfagor in his most winning voice.

"Yes," said the Colonel. "And who the Devil may you be, sir?" in a voice which would carry down to Killara, let alone to Sheila twenty yards off.

"Ha ha," said Belfagor, grinding his teeth and swallowing the sparks. He came close to the Colonel and said in a whisper, "What I came for was to tell you of poachers. As I was passing—" he waved a hand in the direction of the river— "I saw two very ruffianly looking characters sneaking on to your preserves. One of them disguised as a priest—"

"Poachers!" screamed the Colonel. "A priest! Father Finn, by heaven! I'll smash him! I'll have him cashiered! I'll write to the Pope!" And, gripping his blackthorn stick in one hand and Belfagor's elbow in the other, he began running on his short bandy legs towards the river.

All of which left Sheila dazed for the moment, both with the treachery of mankind and the danger of her beloved. For if Father Finn stood to be reported to the Pope, Jack Ryan stood to go to gaol for six months.

"What'll I do?" she cried, wringing her hands, but already her feet were showing her, and she began running down to where she knew Jack Ryan was likeliest to be, taking shorter cuts than the Colonel and longer strides.

So there was Hugh Byrne rushing down to the river on one side, fat and treacherous and gloating, his bald head shimmering with sweat and satisfaction. And there was the Colonel and Belfagor racing down to the river on the other side, the one full of cunning and malice, and the other of fury and a landlord's outrage. And on the side of love and innocence and the rights of poachers, nothing but poor Sheila tearing her stockings to shreds on the bushes and her heart prostrated with the thought of no dancing partner for twenty-six Sundays at a stretch. And no warm kisses after the dance, either, though we can only hope that no such thought was crossing her maiden mind.

And in the midst of all this storm of passion and plotting, our two poachers tense as heroes over the Long Pool by the waterfall. Jack Ryan stretched on his belly on the bank holding the gaff and Father Finn up to his armpits in the water, only the Roman collar dry on him and the sweat of battle starting from his head. For they had a salmon. Thirty pounds? Nearer fifty. A salmon six years in the sea, feeding his great sides with the delicacies of the ocean and giving no thought to love or marriage until the end of the sixth year, when a sudden hunger for Killara took him out of the Atlantic and up the narrow stream of his birth. But

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he'd grown too fat and fine to climb it, and here he was stuck in the Long Pool, unable to jump the fall.

It was his brother that Jack Ryan had heard tell of, the year before. But his brother had been a sprat to him, a shrimp, a sardine. This was the king of all the salmon that ever went slipping and wriggling down from Killara as little melts to the great sea.

It had taken the breath out of Jack's throat when he saw it, and Father Finn had crossed himself and rolled his old trousers to the knee. "God bless the rod and line that catches it," he said, and with his hands trembling he fitted a number seven fly to the cast. "Do you take the gaff, Jack," he said, "and may God forgive us both for what we're going to do."

And then they did it. A long, curling cast of the fly to the sunlit end of the pool, and the big fish rising lazily, silver shadowy from the dark depths under the rock. He wasn't hungry, for he had his mind on higher things, such as hen-salmon, and he was very tired, from trying to jump the fall all morning. But there was an intriguing something about the way that little red fly danced above the water, and went off to itself with such speed and came back so curvingly and seductively. But even so he didn't bite fast, nor hastily, nor without due consideration.

"You'll never get him, Father," Jack whispered. "Let me use the spear on him," and began to pull out his three-pronged telescopic spear from his coat pocket.

"I'll be damned if I don't make him strike," said Father Finn between his teeth; and deep in the preserves of Hell the Devil, who was listening, ground his teeth together and rubbed his hands with delight.

"We have him," the Devil cried. "Belfy'll get him as sure as turnips. And don't let him forget the rod and line, or I'll skin him," he said to himself. "A true blessing on it! It'll never melt!"

But the Devil was far from Father Finn's mind at that moment, for just then he made the cast all fishermen dream of making, with the little red fly drifting, settling, curling down to kiss the water an inch from the salmon's lazy, hooked snout. And with a flash and a swirl and tick on the line the hook was gone, sunk half a fathom beneath the surface. And then the fight! By the Holy Powers the fight that fish began to make! Up the pool, and down again, and from the bottom to the surface. Racing and roiling and Father Finn into his knees' depth, and his belt's depth, and up to his chest, and the fish careering past him like a shark. Leaping at the falls with the spring of a bow, six feet high and higher, and lipping the top of it.

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" Get him in under the bank," hissed Jack. " Get him close under me while I strike him," and he poised the gaff.

When along came Hugh Byrne, creeping and sidling and slipping through the bushes. As soon as he saw the salmon and the condition of Father Finn, he clutched himself with delight.

" I have him! " And down he went to the very bank of the stream, and in his schoolmaster's voice said, " Father Finn! Whatever are you doing? "

" Be damned to you," said Father Finn, " can't you see what I'm doing? " And with no more bother than that he went on fighting the fish.

" You're poaching! " screeched Hugh Byrne, and went close up to the bank to shout it again. When didn't the edge of the bank give way under him and in he slipped, head over heel, and came to the surface chin-deep beside Father Finn?

" Good man yourself," cried the priest, thinking the schoolmaster had come in to help him. And at that moment the great salmon took the most desperate leap of its life and hit Father Finn a tremendous welt across the side of the head. Fifty pounds of solid fish at full speed. And Father Finn staggering in the water, and then sinking unconscious below the surface, rod and line fallen from his hand.

" He's dead," cried Jack in terror and sprang into the pool to drag the wounded curate out of the water, while the schoolmaster, finding the salmon seeming to attack him from all sides, picked up the rod and began to defend himself, striking this way and that with it at the fish.

Jack dragged the curate out on to the bank and was trying to revive him there when, with a rustle of leaves and a panting voice, Sheila was at his back.

" The Colonel is coming," she gasped at him. " And a stranger, who informed on you and the Father. Get out of here while there's time! "

" Take his legs then," said Jack, and between the two of them they dragged and carried the priest to safety, fifty yards off in a clump of bushes. And two seconds after they were out of sight, in broke the Colonel and Belfagor to the little clearing round the pool, where the schoolmaster was splashing and flailing the water with the rod.

" Wait till I get my hands on that damned curate," screeched the Colonel.

" Wait till I get *my* hands on him," said Belfagor.

" Save me! " the schoolmaster was screeching, his voice choked with water and terror. But if what was going through his mind about Father Finn wasn't blasphemy and wickedness and

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grounds for damnation, I never heard what was. When, *thump*, the fish hit him in the stomach and under he went, swallowing a gallon of river water on the way.

"He's mine!" screamed Belfagor, not bothering with disguise, and stretching his arm he whipped schoolmaster, rod and gaff and salmon out of the pool with one great sweep and vanished up the hill in a cloud of sulphur.

The Colonel sat down very suddenly on the bank, not trusting his eyes. The pool was quite still again. Only a little curl of steam came up from the centre of it where Belfagor had stuck in his hand. Very slowly the Colonel got up and tottered back to the Big House.

"Bring me three bottles of brandy and some hot water and brown sugar," he said to his housekeeper. "I'm going to bed." And he stayed there for a month.

It was nearly a month before Father Finn was well enough to get up either, and by a merciful providence he'd lost all memory of what had happened, so that it was as great a mystery to him as to Father John how and why Hugh Byrne the schoolmaster should have disappeared.

"A great loss to the parish," Father Finn always says, for he's a true parish priest, filled with charity, and a fine successor to Father John. But nevertheless he gets on much better with the new schoolmaster, a poet and chess player like himself.

But what about Hugh Byrne? Oh, the splash when he hit the Styx. Little good his algebra and his Latin were to him there, or his hypocrisy either. And there he is swimming and fighting to this day, with the Devil and Belfagor on the bank, one with the rod and line and the other with the gaff, and half the Devils in Hell out watching the sport. And if he can escape the gaff till Doomsday, maybe he has a chance after all. © Brian Cleeve 1963

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A SET OF STATUES

This laurelled landscape, set with statues
In classic white, or mortal black
Serves for our game of Snakes and Ladders
With Adam as the steeplejack.

ANON

Listen!
I will make a small statue
of a boy today,
that will half look at you
and half away.

I will have him standing
in darkness, but
he will be pretending
that he is not

I will give him a fiddle
and he will not know
that it broke in the middle
long ago.

His lips will be parted
as though he smiled
With the broken-hearted
grace of a child . . .

HUMBERT WOLFE, *Boy in the Dusk*

Trunk Call

She began to long to lean against something cold. A nude female figure in marble by the door looked the very thing . . . A wild streak of dust splashed her right cheek.

"*Oh!* Good *gracious!*" She rubbed desperately. It came off. "It's that statue." She indicated the round-limbed naked

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but modest figure on the pedestal. "I was leaning against it."

"*Leaning* against it? What on earth for? The girl's loopy." They were off again, louder than ever . . .

"You always were eccentric, my poor child," sighed Dolly, fanning herself with her programme. "I fear for you . . . All the same," she went on, nudging her sister, "it daon't say much for 'er Lidyship's 'ousemaids, do it?"

"Nao. You'd reelly think they'd give the *limbs* a rub over when company's expected. I can understand them not caring to put a duster to the—er—ahem!—the *trunk*."

ROSAMOND LEHMANN, *Invitation to the Waltz*

Little Old Eros

'Twas a very small garden;
The paths were of stone,
Scattered with leaves,
With moss overgrown;
And a little old Cupid
Stood under a tree,
With a small broken bow
He stood aiming at me.

The dog-rose in briars
Hung over the weeds,
The air was aflock
With the floating of seeds;
And a little old Cupid
Stood under a tree
With a small broken bow
He stood aiming at me.

WALTER DE LA MARE, *The Little Old Cupid*

Berris was leaning against one of his own statues, grinning to himself; Erif thought critically that he looked rather well in his short faun skin. Two of the girls in helpless giggles were failing to mend a thyrsus; the big gilt pine-cone went rolling about, and finally landed by Erif's curtain. She picked it up and came out into the room; they shouted at her joyfully and two or three ran up and kissed her. They smelt of grapes and wine and the hot night; she pushed them away, but not really angrily . . . Metrotimé sat up with a long swing from the hips and in the same movement flung her garland across Erif's shoulders. Bryony berries pattered on the floor.

NAOMI MITCHISON, *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*

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Unbeknown I looked in at the window;
And there I saw my bride
Sitting lonesome in the chimney-nook,
With the cat alongside.

Slowly she drew out from under her apron
An image made of wax,
Shaped like a man, and all stuck over
With pins and with tacks.

She set it down to stand in the embers—
The wax began to run,
Mother! Mother! That waxen image,
I think it was your son!

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER, *The Image*

Immortal Grief

But when I saw the statue, I found he had been too cold in its praise. The god was represented as in early manhood, a glorious youth, of nineteen or twenty years, his face most noble, mingled of grace and power. A blue chlamys hung from his shoulder, and his left hand held the lyre . . . I looked again and thought both Pheidias and the youth must have been visited by some vision; for it seemed that this and no other was the very form and face of the god. I asked if he knew who had posed for the work. "Certainly," he said; "it is common knowledge, and though you are young you will surely have heard of the man, for it is only a few years since his name was in everyone's mouth: Myron, son of Philokles, whom they call The Beautiful."

My mind was silent, like fallen snows in a still air. I stood, and gazed. Then, as winter's white comes crashing down the mountain side and runs away in water, grief fell upon me for all mortal men, so great that my body would scarcely hold it . . . I lifted my arm, and covered my face with my mantle as I wept.

MARY RENAULT, *The Last of the Wine*

Stone Sneer

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed . . .

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, *Ozymandias*

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On Flinders Face

By STEVE LAWRENCE

DIRK De Lange jammed his hand down on the hooter and blew another long blast. "Damn him, he was supposed to be ready at four o'clock—it's half past now, almost morning."

He wound down the car window and put his head out, twisting his face upwards to look at the one lighted window in the block of apartments above them.

"Damn it, Mike, I don't know why you couldn't have found someone else."

The street light lit Michael's face from the side, but left his eyes in shadow. "Who else could do it?" he asked quietly, the way he always spoke.

"Rusty or Colin—they're both strong boys." Dirk's head was still out of the window.

"They're strong, but neither of them has the reach. Strength isn't enough, Dirk, you know that; you've been on Flinders' Face before."

Dirk drew his head inside and sat staring across the black bonnet of the car. Yes, he had been on Flinders' Face before and the memory of it came back to him, walking softly up his spine until it tickled under his scalp and made the hair on his forearms lift. Yes, he had been on Flinders' Face with one fist jammed into the crack in the rock and his other hand reaching out sideways, desperately, futilely clawing for a hold on the knob that was Flinders' nose. It had been too long a reach for him as it had been for everyone else who had tried to climb that mountain, and in the end he had swung his body back and held on to the crack with both hands, his breathing burning the back of his throat, the sweat running into his eyes, and fifteen hundred feet of open drop below him sucking at his heels. With a small shudder Dirk brought himself back to the present and turned to Mike.

"Well, I don't like it. It's going to be a really fouled-up

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climb, they always are when they start like this. I don't like it and I don't like Shep. When I go on to a mountain I like to have cheerful types with me, not a great loud-mouthed oaf."

"You want to climb Flinders', don't you?" asked Mike.

"Of course, but—"

"Well, there's only one man who can reach across from the crack to the nose, and you know it."

Dirk lit a cigarette to cover the fact that he hadn't an answer. He blew out smoke, jetting it against the windscreen and watching it roll back in a round cloud.

"Well, I wish he'd hurry up," he said with less feeling.

"Here he comes." Mike pointed with his chin at the front entrance of the building, and Dirk turned to watch Shep coming down the steps. The light was behind him and his body was a dark silhouette; an inverted pyramid of wide shoulders narrowing down to his waist. He was a huge man. The rucksack he carried in one hand looked like a schoolboy's satchel against his bulk.

"Are you Oakies in a hurry?" he asked as he opened the back door of the car and threw his rucksack on to the seat.

"Damn it all, Shep, we've been waiting half an hour," Dirk protested.

"I was busy, I couldn't stop what I was doing." Shep climbed into the back of the car and settled against the seat. He folded his arms across his chest and grinned cheerfully. Dirk looked at his arms; they were long and thick, ridged with muscles and coated with black hair. He wanted to tell him that the only reason they were taking him with them was those arms, but instead he demanded, "The light's been on in your room the whole time; what were you doing? You should have had your gear packed last night."

Shep grinned again. He had white teeth, and his jowls were shiny from a new shave but already they were blue with beard.

"I was taking another spoonful out of the honeypot," he said. "We might be three or four days on the mountain and that's a long time with no honey."

"You had a woman up there?" Dirk asked.

"Some woman," affirmed Shep. "I wish I could get *her* into my haversack."

"We've got a big day on the mountain ahead of us," said Dirk, "and you must do that all night. What kind of shape are you going to be in?"

"Don't worry about me; when you get tired, I'll be the one that picks you up and carries you. Now let's get going."

Dirk started the engine and slammed into gear. He pulled

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away from the kerb fast, and Shep transferred his attention to the back of Michael's head.

"Hullo, Mike."

"Hullo, Shep."

"How have you been?"

"Not too bad, thanks."

"How's your wife?" Shep grinned. Yoni was as plump and as darkly ripe as only a young Jewess can be. "I haven't seen her since the Mountain Club dance."

Haven't you! Haven't you! Michael thought bitterly, but his voice was quiet as ever as he answered.

"She's fine, thanks."

"Give her my regards, will you?"

"All right," said Michael. "Oh, you bastard, you dirty bastard." His lips formed the words, but in the darkness neither of the others saw them move.

They drove out along the coast road and the sea was grey with the mist on it. The headlights were long white shafts in the mist and the wind throbbed against the car. At the twenty-five mile peg Dirk slowed and swung off on to the unmade road. The dust lifted sluggishly behind them, heavy with the dew. The night and the mist drew back as the morning light gathered strength, and Dirk switched off the headlights. The road went up another rise, and as they reached the top they saw the mountains ahead of them. Blue and ragged crested, softened by distance and the early light.

Dirk felt something start to screw up tight inside his stomach and he groped for the packet of cigarettes in his top pocket. The fear that was always his companion on the mountains was with him again—not strong yet, but unmistakably there.

He glanced sideways at Michael. Michael's lips were slightly parted and he leaned forward in the seat. Michael's eyes were so blue they were almost black. His thoughts moved in them like the shadowy shapes of fish below the surface of the sea. Dirk could seldom tell whether the shapes were sunfish or sharks but now, looking at his eyes, Dirk could read his feelings. Michael was watching the mountains the same way a man watches the woman he loves.

Shep leaned over and tapped Dirk's arm. "Have you got a smoke for me?" he asked.

"Where are yours?" Dirk demanded. The man irritated him. Michael had love for the mountains, Dirk had fear, but Shep had nothing, and especially not fear or love.

"I forgot to bring any," said Shep.

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"And I suppose you forgot to bring any food, the same as last time." Dirk passed the packet of cigarettes back over his shoulder.

"The stores were closed when I knocked off work last night." Shep laughed. "Anyway, I knew you'd have enough." He lit one of the cigarettes and dropped the packet over on to the front seat.

"Thanks, Professor."

"I'm not a professor," Dirk told him.

"What are you then?"

"I'm an architect."

"You're a professor," said Shep with finality. "Architects are professors. Michael's a professor too. He's a doctor and doctors are professors—only Michael's a specialist, he specialises in women."

Michael said nothing. He went on staring ahead, but his lips closed and the thing in his eyes changed shape.

"Cut it out, Shep," snapped Dirk.

"Nothing wrong with that," said Shep. "I do the same only I'm not a professor. I don't get paid for it." He chuckled, drew on the cigarette, and leaned back against the maroon leather seat. The top of his head almost touched the roof of the car and his legs were too long for the space between the seats.

The road climbed out of the grassland and started twisting through the foothills. Dirk drove fast, holding the car into the curves and Michael went on looking at the mountains. They were close now, hanging over the road. Grey rock split into buttresses, collapsed into scree slopes or rearing proudly to the peaks. The gullies were choked with olive green scrub and, at one place, a waterfall dropped sheer a thousand feet—white water with spray blowing off it like smoke.

"Slow down," said Mike. "You'll miss the turn-off." Dirk lifted his foot off the accelerator. "There it is. Gently now, Dirk, or you'll knock the sump out."

Dirk dropped into low gear and turned on to the track. Storm water had washed it out and left it cluttered with boulders. Dirk sat forward on the seat and eased the car over them, grimacing at every ominous scraping that came from under the chassis. The track ran through a wattle plantation, and the trees were in flower. Bright yellow flowers against the dark leaves. The trees were planted close together and their branches blocked out the sky; it was gloomy and clammy cold in the plantation. The road ended at a stream.

Dirk stopped the car, pulled on the handbrake, and cut the

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engine. His voice sounded unnaturally loud in the sudden quiet.

"The end of the line, gentlemen. What's the time?"

"Seven o'clock," answered Shep.

"If we're going to reach the ledge below the nose before nightfall, then we'd better jump about. It's eight hours from the foot of the face to the ledge and, thanks to Shep, we're still five miles from the mountain."

They climbed out of the car, moving stiffly from having been so long confined, and Dirk went back and opened the boot. He took out the two rucksacks and the thick coils of nylon rope, then he slammed the boot closed and locked it. He unbuckled the flap of his own rucksack, took out an old jungle hat and pulled it on. He swung the pack on to his back and shrugged his arms through the straps. He bounced from the knees, settling the pack between his shoulders, then he picked up one of the coils of rope and draped it round his neck.

"All set?" he asked the others. They went to the stream with Michael leading, and clambered down the bank. The water was tinted to the colour of Scotch whisky; it gurgled eagerly as it hurried between the boulders that choked its course. There was a pool downstream from them and Dirk could see the trout lying in the shallow brown water, fanning their tails to hold their heads into the current.

Michael had stopped at the edge of the water, and now he looked back at Dirk. They grinned at each other, neither of them had to say anything; they both understood; that shared grin had said it for them. It had asked and answered all the questions. "Do you see the trout? Can you taste the air? Can you smell the wattle flowers and do you feel the excitement for this mountain that we are going to climb?"

"Come on, you Oakies, is this a sunday school picnic? Let's get going," said Shep.

They crossed the water, jumping from boulder to boulder. The plantation ended just beyond the stream, and they left it behind and went on to the first slope of the range. It was steep, pimpled with rock and covered in knee-high grass. The path ran straight up it. They leaned forward against their packs, their bodies loosening and the sweat starting to come. Every few paces Dirk lifted his eyes to the top of the slope where the path ran through a deep saddle between two small peaks. Dread and anticipation mixed in an exhilarating cocktail in Dirk's stomach—for from that notch they would be able to see the mountain.

Michael took the slope without stopping and both he and Dirk were puffing a little as they came up on to the crest. Shep was breathing easily and there was only a fine dew on his forehead.

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They spread out across the path, standing shoulder to shoulder with their thumbs hooked into their shoulder-straps and their woollen shirts making three bright spots of colour in the wilderness of brown grass and grey rock.

Ahead of them was Flinders' Face. Clean and smooth as an axe stroke, the wall of rock stood two thousand sheer feet up into the sky. No man had ever climbed it, but some had died trying. This mountain was a killer.

Once accustomed to the immensity of the face, the eye could discern the pattern of cracks and ledges that covered it the way the prints cover the ball of a thumb. In some of the cracks grew little pockets of bright green vegetation, looking forlorn and out of place on that perpendicular sheet of rock. Rainwater had painted yellow stains down it, and in places there were vivid patches of lichen, reds and pale blues.

They stood silently and watched it.

Oh, God! thought Dirk. If only you would give me the power to put some of that beauty into just one of my buildings—if only I too could create something so eternally alive, something possessed of such serene ferocity. Then his mind darted off in a different direction. And please God, protect me from death on this mountain today. His right hand came up to cross himself but he stopped and glanced guiltily at Michael. Michael had seen the movement and now he looked at Dirk. They did not grin this time, but the understanding was still there.

It is good to have someone like Michael to climb with, thought Dirk. I wish that Shep weren't here to spoil it.

Dirk looked at Shep and he felt a little flutter of relief. Shep was staring at the mountain, his face was intent, and the wings of grey hair at his temples softened his otherwise brutal good looks. Shep turned his head to Dirk; there was a thoughtful, almost bewildered expression on his face, and Dirk felt a sudden rush of affection for him. Shep was feeling it too; Shep understood.

"I suppose you brought baked beans again," said Shep.

Dirk stared at him.

"I suppose it's baked beans and tinned peaches—is that right?"

Dirk nodded, unable to speak as the first tender shoots of feeling withered.

"Hell!" said Shep disgustedly. "Baked beans—always baked beans." Then there was a little flicker of hope in his eyes. "Michael, Michael man, what did you bring?"

"Beans as well," said Michael softly. He did not look at

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Shep, not once the whole morning had he looked at Shep.

"Hell!" said Shep. "The two professors with their big bank accounts, their big motor cars and their big houses on Marine Drive—but what do they eat? They eat beans! You Oakies related to horses or something? Didn't no one ever tell you that man's food is meat?"

"Come on," said Michael, and led off towards the face.

"Beans," said Shep, "beans!"

They went down into the shallow valley and up the other side. They scrambled over the scree slope with the rock rolling and sliding under their feet and at last they stood at the foot of the face. They were in shadow, for the mountain filled half the sky above them, and yet it was not so terrifying when they were this close to it. Perspective had foreshortened the face. It might only have been a hundred feet high instead of two thousand.

Michael looked at his watch. "A quarter to ten—we've made good time. We'll take a fifteen-minute breather, and then we'll go to it."

"You Oakies tired or something?" asked Shep. "That's what comes of eating beans all the time, saps your strength." But he dropped his pack and sat down. "Give us one of your smokes, Professor."

"Don't call me that," snapped Dirk. He took a cigarette out of the packet and tossed it to Shep, then he lay back and looked up the cliff. The clouds were blowing in from the sea, and as they disappeared over the edge of the mountain their movement gave Dirk the sensation that the cliff was falling forward on top of him. Dirk sat up again hurriedly.

"You see that flat rock there?" Shep pointed to a rock the size of a dining-room table. "That's where we found Charlie Laurens. Did you come up that time with us to fetch him in, Michael?"

Michael shook his head without looking at him, and Shep went on reminiscently.

"He was trying to reach old Flinders' nose, and he came down to where he'd started from a damn sight quicker than he went up." Shep laughed and drew on his cigarette.

"He was lying on his back on that rock. Not much blood, just a little out of his mouth and nose. You'd have thought he was sleeping, except for his colour—he was as purple as a Satsuma plum all over; every inch of him. He must have burst every blood vessel in his body when he hit, and when we tried to pick him up—" Shep chuckled again—"it was like trying to pick up a plastic bag full of jelly. There wasn't a piece of

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bone in his body bigger than the top joint of your little finger. A fifteen-hundred foot fall sure smashes an Oakie."

Dirk stood up abruptly.

" Let's get going, Mike."

Michael looked at him with his blue-black eyes, and his dark hair flopping forward on to his forehead.

" I'll lead the first pitch," he said. " Then Shep will come next."

He stood up and buckled the waist-strap of his rucksack. He handed his coil of rope to Dirk, took the end back from him, and tied it round his waist. Then he went to the wall and stood facing it. He touched the rock, running his hands over it to get the feel of it.

" I'm on! " he said, and started to climb. Dirk liked to watch Michael climb. He moved daintily but deceptively fast, using his legs mostly, leaning back from the rock, his body always in balance, poised above his feet, and the rope hanging down behind him like a tail, slithering after him up the face. Fifty feet up, Michael reached a shelf.

" Come on, Shep," he called down.

Shep tied himself on to the rope and went to the face. Then he flung himself at it, lunging for each hold, climbing with his arms and legs and his whole body, flailing his way up to where Michael waited for him on the shelf.

" Come on, Dirk," called Michael.

Dirk swallowed the thick slime that had accumulated in his mouth. He tied on to the rope. There was a pulse beating in his ears. He went to the face, and the stone was rough and sharply harsh under his hands. He started to climb.

They went upwards all that day, climbing without packs on the tricky pitches and pulling them up afterwards on the rope. With each hour the drop beneath them was deeper, more magnetic. The sun came over the mountain and burnt on to their backs. The rock bounced the heat back on their faces and their clothing moistened with sweat.

They ate a late lunch on a ledge twelve hundred feet above the valley. They sat in a row with their backs to the rock and their feet hanging over the edge.

" How does it go from here, Michael? " asked Shep through a mouthful of tinned peaches.

" We go along this ledge for fifty feet or so, then there's an easy chimney which takes us to the bottom of the Wailing Pitch." Michael spoke out into space.

" This Wailing Pitch is quite something, isn't it? "

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"There's a nasty little overhang at the top of the chimney, but the last time I was here I left pitons in it, so it's fairly easy to get round." Michael paused. "However, once you're on to the Wailing Pitch—well, let's just say it deserves its name. It's where strong men cry. If you fall, you can't expect anyone to hold you—there's just not enough room at the top of the chimney for a decent belay point."

Shep held the peach tin to his mouth and emptied it. He wiped a trickle of juice off his chin and threw the tin over the edge.

"That's where Tiny Klur and Jimmy Marsden came off, isn't it?" Shep swallowed the peaches and went on. "I'm sorry I missed that. I couldn't get off work to come and help the boys bring them back. They tell me it was a rare old sight. They couldn't sort out who was who, so they put them both in one sack and left it to the undertaker. Give us a smoke, Professor."

Dirk passed him the packet.

"Who's going to lead?" asked Shep.

"I will," said Michael.

"Why not Dirkie boy here? How is it that Dirkie always has somebody up above him, holding him on a rope when the going gets tough?"

Michael turned his head and for the first time looked straight at Shep. There were sharks in his eyes.

"I don't think I like that, Shep. I think it's best you take it back."

They stared at each other for a second, then Shep shrugged and grinned.

"I'm sorry, Professor. I'm sorry you always have to have someone holding you." Shep stood up, picked up his pack and walked along the ledge. He moved as confidently as though he were in his own bedroom; the precipice at his right hand might not have existed. Dirk and Michael shuffled after him, leaning in towards the security of the face. Shep reached the chimney. It was a vertical slot that cut into the cliff.

"You want me to lead here, Mike?" asked Shep.

"All right."

Shep dropped his pack and tied on. He stepped sideways into the chimney and put his back to the rock; he lifted his right foot and thrust with it against the far wall, holding himself in position; then, with his left foot doubled under him, he pushed himself upwards. His woollen shirt made a soft brushing sound against the rock. He grunted as he worked, changing legs jerkily, keeping himself jammed in the slot. Michael and Dirk

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stood close together on the ledge, almost touching, for there was little standing room. They stared up at Shep's bulging buttocks and driving legs.

"Mike—" Dirk's voice croaked. He stopped and cleared his throat. "Mike, will you let me lead on the Wailing Pitch, please?"

Michael looked at him quickly, then up again at Shep.

"You shouldn't listen to that big baboon. He talks all the time, and very little of it makes sense."

"I don't give a damn what he thinks; I want to do it for what I think."

Michael shook his head doubtfully.

"I'll lead, Dirk, I know the pitch."

"So do I, Mike. Please."

Michael looked at him again, a slow searching look.

"Please, Mike."

"All right," said Michael.

Shep's voice came down to them, hoarse with exertion. "Next for shaving, please."

Dirk put his hand on Michael's arm, and squeezed slightly. "Thanks, Mike." Then he stepped into the rock slot.

At the top of the chimney they crowded into a small, three-sided cubbyhole of stone. There was not enough room to sit down. A chip of loose stone rolled under Dirk's boot and dropped over the edge. They stood quietly and listened to it rattle down the cliff. It fell for a long time and they never heard it hit the bottom.

Michael broke the silence. "Are you ready, Dirk?"

The overhang of rock stuck out above their cubbyhole like the roof of a verandah. Driven into its underside was a row of four pitons which ran out to the lip of the overhang. The steel rings of the pitons hung down like meat-hooks in a butcher's shop.

"Yes, I'm ready," said Dirk. His stomach felt as though it were full of warm olive oil. He wanted to be sick.

"Dirkie boy," crowed Shep. "Dirkie boy, are you going to lead?"

"Yes," said Dirk. "I'm going to lead."

"We'll give you a sack all to yourself when we carry you home." Shep was pleased with that joke, but he was the only one who laughed.

Dirk leaned out and grasped the first piton. He tested it, putting his weight on it. Then he clipped himself to it with the steel snap-ring karabiner on the sling round his waist. He took a very deep breath and swung out over the void. Fear

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kicked inside him as strongly as an eight-month foetus, weakening him, but he worked his way outwards, clipping on the karabiners, threading the line through the pitons and moving slowly, terribly slowly, towards the outer edge of the overhang.

"Don't look down, don't look down," chanted his brain. He stared at the stone above his head and felt his feet swinging free. He came to the last piton, clipped on to it and then he groped blindly round the edge of the overhang. He found a hold, a pathetic little fingerhold, and he held it while he groped with his free hand for another. Then he dragged himself up and hung by his arms only. He was round the overhang and on to the Wailing Pitch. He was alone. The other two were left behind.

He had to get his feet on to the rock quickly; already his arms were tiring, starting to judder. There was another hold just above him. He loosened one hand and snatched at it, there was another hold above that, he took it with his other hand. The rock moved slowly in front of his face. He felt his boots scrape on stone and then his tricounas bit in. His breath was coming in great, hissing gasps and his throat was dry.

"Are you all right, Dirk?" Michael's voice sounded very far away.

"All right," he answered, and went on.

"Keep moving, keep moving," chanted his brain. The holds were tiny flakes of stone. He was bleeding from under his fingernails. The blood left brown smears on the grey rock.

"Keep moving." His fingers were numb and it was spreading up his arms.

"Keep moving." His legs were shaking. He stopped, clinging with both hands and both feet.

"Go on, go on—move!" screamed his brain. But slowly his body flattened itself against the rock. This was the attitude of despair, the attitude of defeat. To lie against the rock on a climb like the Wailing Pitch was to invite death in a loud voice.

"I'm not afraid." The wonder of it came to him in a bright rush. "I'm going to die and I'm not afraid."

The flake of rock under his right hand made a small metallic sound, a brittle sound.

Rotten rock, he thought, staring at it, but he was not afraid. He felt the flake move under his fingers and he lifted his eyes.

The ledge was level with the top of his head. He had not known it was so close, and suddenly there was a little more strength left in him. He let go with his right hand and flung it above his head. It caught. He sent his left hand after it, and then he wriggled his body on to the ledge, and he lay on his face.

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" Dirk, Dirk—answer me—are you all right? " Michael's voice floated up to him, but distance could not blunt the edge of urgency in it.

Michael and Dirk sat close together on the ledge and looked out at the sea. The sun was setting into it. The sun was hot red but its light was a soft orange that made the mountains glow and threw the valleys into deep black contrast.

" How do you feel, Dirk? " asked Michael softly. He did not want Shep to join the conversation.

" I feel good," said Dirk. He felt clean, all the fear was burnt out of him and he knew that he would never again be afraid on the mountains.

" You did very well." Michael smiled his shy Jewish smile.

" Like hell, I did," said Dirk happily.

" Like hell, he did," agreed Shep. Shep was lying on his back and staring up at Flinders' nose. " He was shaking so much, I thought the whole damn mountain was going to fall on us."

Dirk laughed out loud. Not even Shep could spoil it for him now. He had it locked away deep down inside him. Shep sat up restlessly. " You know what I'd like? " he said.

" Don't tell us, let us guess," murmured Dirk.

Shep stood up and went to the edge. He stood staring out over the valley, the toes of his boots stuck over the drop.

" The mountains are a good place for it. It must be the air up here that gets under their skirts.

" Next week I've some leave due to me—there's a honeypot I know. Her husband's going to a conference somewhere—I think I'll bring her into the mountains and let her be really primitive with me."

" One day, Shep, you're going to get a bullet where you don't need it," Dirk told him.

Shep snorted scornfully.

" I'll tell you a story, Professor. When I was a kid we used to pinch apples out of an orchard that belonged to an old Army pensioner. This Oakie had a shotgun. He used to chase us. ' Leave my apples,' he'd shout at us. ' Come back or I'll shoot.' I used to pinch his apples almost every day and—you know what, Professor—he never did shoot."

Shep chuckled. " An apple and a cheating woman have about the same value: neither of them are worth risking the rope for. Most men know that. They shout like hell but they seldom shoot."

Michael had gone very pale, he wasn't looking at Shep.

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"If anybody messed around with my wife, I'd kill him," said Dirk.

"Oh you would, would you?" Shep grinned. "What do you know about killing, Dirkie boy; have you read about it in books? Did they teach you about it at the University while we were at El Alamein and Benghazi and Cassino?"

"I'd kill him," said Dirk again.

"Sure, sure," said Shep. "Now why don't you open a tin of beans and we'll talk about something you understand."

Michael woke in the grey of not yet day. He sat up and let his sleeping-bag fall to his waist. The world was gone, swallowed up in the mist. The mist was below them—a flat, white motionless sea. There was no wind, no sound, nothing but the mist and the mountain. Michael looked up at Flinders' nose. The nose was a shaft of rock that stuck out of the face. It was as thick as the body of an elephant and about twice as long. At the tip it was slightly mushroomed. Next to it, in the smooth face of the rock, ran a crack. The crack came right down to the ledge on which he sat. It was a small crack, about four inches wide. It passed tantalisingly close to the nose and petered out just above it.

There was a movement next to him and Michael looked down. Dirk was awake. He was watching.

"You want this mountain badly, don't you, Mike?"

Michael nodded.

"Yes," he said. "Yes, I do. Flinders' is my mountain. I was the first to reach this ledge, Tiny Klur and I. That was seven years ago, when I was still at Medical School. Tiny's dead now, Flinders' killed him. Now this mountain belongs to me."

"You'll have it today. Shep will give it to you."

They both looked at Shep. He slept on his back and his mouth was open. His lips vibrated with each breath and his jaws were black with young beard.

"Yes," said Michael softly, "he owes me that much."

A small red ant ran up Shep's neck and on to his face. Shep's nose twitched and his lips rubbed vaguely together. He sighed and sat up. "I'm hungry," he said.

They ate food cold from the tins, not talking, but now and then looking up at the arrogant shaft of stone that thrust out of the face fifty feet above them. Shep laced his boots, stood up and swung his arms.

"Give me a rope." He grinned at Michael, standing tall over him, big and hairy.

"The sun's not up yet, let's wait for it."

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"The hell with the sun, give me a rope."

Shep tied on. He ran his fingers through his hair, brushing it back from his eyes; then he went to the crack.

"Stand aside, my children, there's man's work to do now."

He thrust a hand into the crack and bunched his fist, swelling it so that it jammed between the stone sides. He put one booted foot into the crack, turning it sideways until it was in, then twisting it straight so it held. He stepped, jammed his other hand in higher, and walked up the face. Dirk was sitting with his back to the wall, paying out the rope over his shoulder, and Michael was watching Shep with dark-eyed intensity.

Shep climbed quickly, hand over hand, foot over foot, hanging back from the face, very big and unafraid. He came level with the nose and he stopped. They could hear his breathing and the squeak of steel-shod boots biting into rock. Shep crouched there a long time, gathering himself. Then his right hand came out of the crack and started moving out sideways across the face. It walked on its fingers like a hairy spider and Shep's body leaned sideways as it followed.

Watching that hand, Michael was breathing small but quickly and Dirk chewed his teeth together nervously. The hand stopped

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inches short of the nose. Shep's whole body was twisted sideways and his arms were spread as wide as a crucifix, but still his fingers had not reached the nose.

" He can't do it," whispered Michael.

There was no movement. Two men frozen on the ledge and the third spread out on the face above them—then, with a simultaneous tingle of horror, they saw Shep's left hand start to squirm out of the crack.

" He's mad," breathed Dirk. " He's stark raving mad."

Shep's left hand came free and his body lunged sideways and then stopped abruptly as his right hand hit the nose. He hung like a hammock, his hands on the nose and his feet still jammed into the crack.

" He's mad, he's mad."

Shep's hands were moving on the rounded stone shaft, probing, exploring, and at last settling on hooked fingers. He kicked his feet loose and his body swung like a pendulum from the nose.

" He's mad," whispered Dirk again.

Shep's arms bent, drawing his body up smoothly. His legs thrashed and he disappeared over the top.

" Oh, my God. He's done it," said Dirk, and he fell back against the wall. His hands were shaking. They heard Shep start to laugh—roaring his jubilation out across the valley like a lion over a new kill.

" I'll go next," said Michael softly.

Michael walked up the crack and looked across to where Shep sat astride the nose. Shep was still laughing: he had tied a loop of rope to a spur of rock in the face behind him and he had clipped his waist-sling to the loop. He laughed at Michael.

" Do you want to come across? "

" Yes," said Michael.

" Yes, please," Shep corrected him.

" Yes, please."

" Give me your hand," laughed Shep, and reached out to him.

Shep's hand was warm and damp with sweat. It fastened on Michael's wrist, and Michael could feel that the sinews of his fingers were as hard as bone. Shep plucked Michael across the gap and sat him on the shaft behind him.

" Thank you," said Michael.

" Don't mention it, old chap." Shep grinned over his shoulder at him. " Now let's get Dirkie boy up here."

Shep stood up, balancing easily on the rounded top of the nose. His back was turned to Michael and the loop of line hung down behind him, joined to his waist-sling by a karabiner.

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Michael put his arm through the loop and settled it in the crook of his elbow. With his other hand he unclipped Shep's karabiner. Shep heard the click and he started to turn. Michael kicked him in the back of the knee and Shep spun sideways, his back arched. His arms windmilled and he plunged backwards off the nose.

Michael still had the tail of Shep's sling in his fist. He braced his body and broke Shep's fall. The jerk stretched him on his face across the nose. His one arm was dragged down by Shep's weight and the other was linked into the loop of nylon rope. He looked over the edge. Shep was hanging under him, turning slowly in the air. The sling was smearing the skin off Michael's fingers; he couldn't hold on much longer. He must say it quickly.

" Shep," he whispered fiercely.

Shep twisted his face up and looked at Michael. Now at last he had fear, it was naked in his eyes. He made a clucking sound in his throat as he tried to speak, and a bubble of saliva broke from the corner of his mouth and slimed down across his cheek.

" Did you enjoy my apples, Shep? " Michael asked bitterly, and understanding mingled with the fear in Shep's eyes. " Did you think you could have Yoni, and my mountain as well? Did you think you could have them both? "

Michael let his fingers open slowly—too slowly. He had waited too long before letting Shep drop. Shep twisted back upon himself like a mamba held by its tail, and his bone-hard fingers closed on Michael's wrist. Then his free hand reached up deliberately and he took Michael's throat between his fingers.

" Pull me up, you bastard, or come with me to the bottom," said Shep. The fear had faded from his eyes, and now there was triumph in its place. He hung suspended from Michael's wrist and Michael's throat. Far below them the mist was dispersing and the tops of the lesser peaks showed through it like the backs of black whales in a white sea.

" Pull me up," Shep said again. Their faces were close together and they were panting at each other. Michael was stretched out across the nose by Shep's weight and only his arm crooked through the rope held them both from the drop.

" Michael, Michael, what's happening? Are you all right? " Dirk's shout came up to them, strident with anxiety.

" Pull me up." There was the first hint of panic in Shep's voice. He was looking into Michael's eyes and there he saw hatred, unreasoning, suicidal hatred. Then Michael smiled. His lips peeled back and it was a smile to match the look in his eyes.

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" Don't be a fool, man, we can both get out of this," whispered Shep. " Let me climb up you. Just lie still and let me get back on the nose. I'll never tell anybody—I swear it—no one will ever know. I give you my word—I'll never tell anyone."

Still smiling at him, Michael straightened his arm. The loop of rope slid across his forearm and caught at his wrist and Shep started to scream. Michael let go. They fell locked together. They fell for a long time and Shep was still screaming. He screamed after the mist had swallowed them, he screamed all the way to the bottom on a high receding key that was cut off abruptly. The silence of the mountain closed in again, and in that silence Dirk crouched on the ledge paralysed with horror.

" Michael," he said, and then again, " Michael."

Below him the mist undulated like a soft white belly digesting its prey. Above him Flinders' nose jutted out of the face in a rock hard orgasm of destruction. © Steve Lawrence 1963

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD

on page 136

Across. 1, *Blast-furnace.* 9, *Undress.* 10, *Rondeau.* 11, *Omen.* 12, *Neigh.* 13, *Curt.* 16, *Insects.* 17, *Trailer.* 18, *Gobbler.* 21, *Assagai.* 23, *Apex.* 24, *Flora.* 25, *Pang.* 28, *Hideout.* 29, *Doubter.* 30, *Sheep-shearer.*

Down. 1, *Badgers.* 2, *Aden.* 3, *Testers.* 4, *Upright.* 5, *None.* 6, *Co-equal.* 7, *Autobiography.* 8, *Butterfingers.* 14, *Scold.* 15, *Lasso.* 19, *Breadth.* 20, *Relates.* 21, *Abridge.* 22, *Grafter.* 26, *Cole.* 27, *Purr.*

SOLUTION to LEISURE PLEASURE in March ARGOSY

1. *Stupid cupid*
2. *Scarlet varlet*
3. *Moister oyster*
4. *Mustard bustard*
5. *Tater freighter*
6. *Shorter snorter*
7. *Whopper topper*
8. *Flabby tabby*
9. *Dapper sapper*
10. *Singes hinges*
11. *Bantam phantom*
12. *Cheerful earfull*
13. *Paper taper*
14. *Dobbin robbin'*
15. *Champion tampion*
16. *Haggard laggard*
17. *Primmer swimmer*
18. *Honky tonky*
19. *Doodles poodles*
20. *Sinister minister*
21. *Trammel camel*
22. *Vapid rapid*
23. *Humble bumble*
24. *Rocky jockey*
25. *Wonky donkey*
26. *Handsome ransom*
27. *Gammon mammon*
28. *Dummy mummy*
29. *Pally valet*
30. *Yankee hanky*

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Not to be Taken

. . . What drugs, what charms,
What conjuration and what mighty magic
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Sod. et Pot. Tart.

"Are all these men druggists?" I asked wonderingly.

"They are . . . I tell you, Hampinker, I've got an idea to spring on this convention—new ideas is what they want. Now, you know the shelf bottles of tartar emetic and Rochelle salt Ant. et Pot. Tart. and Sod. et Pot. Tart.—one's poison, you know, and the other's harmless. It's easy to mistake one label for the other. Where do druggists mostly keep 'em? Why, as far apart as possible, on different shelves. That's wrong. I say keep 'em side by side so when you want one you can always compare it with the other and avoid mistakes. Do you catch the idea?"
O. HENRY, *A Ramble in Aphasia*

Scruples

Chemists who have no scruples
Stand thereby self-accused;
Yet, (teachers tell their pupils)
These are but rarely used.

Duplicity quadruples,
The problem grows intense:
They can't dispense with scruples,
So with them they dispense!

And 'mid their drugs and cupels—
God-fearing, hating quod—
Mix poisons without scruples!
It seems a little odd.

J. A. LINDON

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Red for Danger

Holmes was seated at his side table clad in his dressing-gown and working hard over a chemical investigation. A large curved retort was boiling furiously in the bluish flame of a Bunsen burner, and the distilled drops were condensing into a two-litre measure. My friend hardly glanced up as I entered, and I, seeing that his investigation must be of importance, seated myself in an arm-chair and waited. He dipped into this bottle or that, drawing out a few drops of each with his glass pipette, and finally brought a test-tube containing a solution over to the table. In his right hand he had a slip of litmus-paper.

"You come at a crisis, Watson," said he. "If this paper remains blue, all is well. If it turns red, it means a man's life." He dipped it into the test-tube and it flushed at once into a dull, dirty crimson. "Hum! I thought as much!" he cried.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *The Naval Treaty*

Sweet Stink

The old strange fragrance filled the air,
A fragrance like the garden pink,
But tinged with vague medicinal stink
Of camphor, soap, new sponges, blent
With chloroform and violet scent.
And Wren the chemist tall and spare
Stood gaunt behind his counter there.
Quiet and very wise he seemed,
With skull-like face, bald head that gleamed;
Through spectacles his eyes looked kind . . .

MARTIN ARMSTRONG, *Miss Thompson Goes Shopping*

(*Almost*) *the End*

"I thought you had—" said Emma.

"Presently! Do you know to what you exposed yourself? Didn't you see anything in the corner, on the left, on the third shelf? Speak, answer, articulate something!"

"I—don't—know," stammered the young fellow.

"Ah! You don't know! Well, then, I do know! You saw a bottle of blue glass, sealed with yellow wax, that contains a white powder, on which I have written *Dangerous!* And do you know what is in it? Arsenic! And you go and touch it! You take a pan that was next to it!"

"Next to it!" cried Madame Homais, clasping her hands. 'Arsenic! You might have poisoned us all."

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, *Madame Bovary*

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BLACK PRINCE

by Maurice Druon

HE WAS small but splendidly compact, his legs were slender but well muscled, the feet delicate, the chest deep, the eyes of a velvet brown with long black lashes, the nostrils short but well open, and there were nobility, pride and panache in his carriage . . . In short, he had quality as a horse that most men lack as men.

She . . . but I'll tell you about her later.

The story opens in Paris in the spring of 1730, on the afternoon of Corpus Christi, in the Gobelins district.

By tradition, the famous tapestry-makers held an exhibition on that day not only of their celebrated collection but of the products of the past year; the walls of the great courtyard were hung from top to bottom with the most sumptuous tapestries in the world. The exhibition was warmly recommended by *The Guide to Paris for Foreign Tourists*, though the author issued a warning: " I advise foreigners to be careful of their pockets, for owing to the great crowd one cannot tell next to whom one may be standing."

Mr. Coke, an English tourist, wearing a large wig and a little round hat, was returning from the exhibition. He was not particularly knowledgeable about tapestries; indeed, he knew a great deal more about racehorses. His arms swinging and his stomach swelling under his waistcoat, Mr. Coke drifted with the crowd down the rue Croulebarde which, lined with market gardens, gave into the faubourg Saint-Marcel. He gazed with appreciation at the pretty women in their striped dresses, which were still similar to those Monsieur Watteau, who had died only a few years before, used to paint. Neither the noise nor the crowd surprised him; his guide-book had warned him about them.

" One should take proper care in the streets of Paris. Besides

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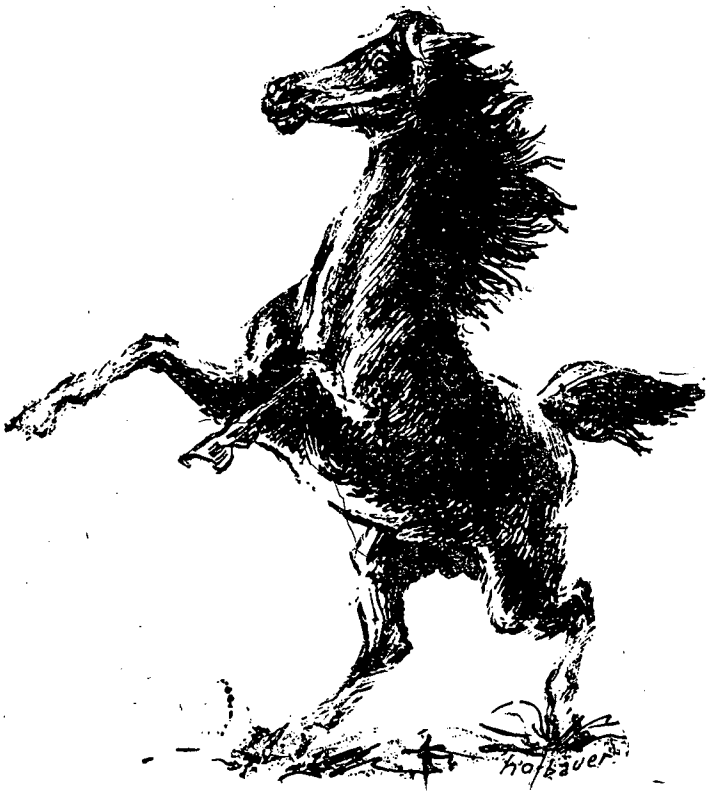

the jostling crowd on foot, a great number of coaches and carts fill the streets till late at night and they frequently travel at a great pace. One should look carefully about one. In trying to avoid a foot passenger in front, one may well be jostled by another bearing down on one from behind, for it is impossible to hear anything due to the noise of the traffic."

And, indeed, Mr. Coke was not keeping his eyes sufficiently about him, for he was suddenly sent sprawling in the dust by a violent blow on the shoulder. A crowd immediately gathered round, but he got to his feet without much harm and saw the cart that had knocked him over. It was a heavy watercart. Its driver, an Auvergnat like most watersellers, jumped down and helped Mr. Coke dust off his clothes.

" I'm sorry, Monsieur," said the waterseller; " it's this brute

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of a horse. He gets the bit between his teeth and I can't hold him. One day he'll kill someone and get me gaoled."

He pointed to the horse between the shafts of the watercart; it looked a wretched screw; it was filthily dirty and so thin its bones stood out. It was covered with galls, and the bit was too big and heavy for its mouth and was obviously hurting it.

"I made a bad bargain when I bought this damned brute," said the Auvergnat, raising his whip to relieve his anger.

But Mr. Coke caught him by the arm. He was looking at the horse, and the horse was looking at him.

To a man who knows and loves horses, the look in a horse's eye can be as expressive and revealing as that in a human's. And horses, too, can recognise a man who understands them. A horse chooses his master just as much as a man chooses his mount. The large dark eye, which looked at Mr. Coke with both pride and fear, was not that of a draught horse born to a servile condition.

"Let me have a look at that horse," said Mr. Coke. "Where does he come from? How did you buy him?"

The waterseller recognised the tourist's accent and at once began to address him as "my lord."

"You can look at him as much as you like; he was a bad bargain. I bought him because he came from the King's stables, or so I was told. But what use he was to the King, since he can't even pull a watercart, I'm damned if I know."

"The King's stables?" said the Englishman, who had as much difficulty in understanding the Auvergnat's accent as the Auvergnat had in understanding him. "How very strange! I didn't know the King of France had Arab horses. What's this one called?"

"Sham! and it's no name for a Christian horse."

Mr. Coke bent down and felt the horse's dusty legs. Then, straightening up, he looked at the angle of the shoulder, the depth of the chest and the set of the head.

"Will you sell him to me?"

"Sell him to you? On the spot, my lord!" cried the Auvergnat.

But he quickly had second thoughts. The horse had been a bad buy, of course; but he had paid a high price for him; and corn didn't cost nothing; besides, he'd have to find another, and prices were rising.

In the end, the Auvergnat mentioned a sum that seemed to him huge: seventy-five francs. Mr. Coke agreed to it without argument.

"What fools the English are!" the waterseller thought that

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evening as he led Sham to the stables of the Hôtel d'Entragues, in the rue de Tournon.

The grooms of this luxury hotel for rich foreigners turned up their noses at having to curry-comb the thin black nag that looked as if it had been sleeping on a manure heap for months.

The next day, Mr. Coke set about discovering Sham's history. The horse had already passed through several hands. Going from one owner to another, all small people who had used Sham in a harness and had accidents with him, Mr. Coke eventually reached a groom at Versailles.

The Auvergnat had told the truth; Sham had indeed come from the royal stables. He had been part of a lot of eight Arab stallions sent as a present to Louis XV by the Bey of Tunis, on the occasion of the signing of a commercial treaty two years before.

These small, strong horses, so difficult to ride if you did not know them, whose fine delicacy, far from being to the taste of the period, was considered a disadvantage, merely made the King shrug his shoulders. As it happened, he had never been able to find a horse to his liking; during the course of his life he had tried over two thousand, of which none had apparently ever suited him.

Since the King had merely shrugged his shoulders, the Master of the Horse had followed suit, and so had his underlings. The Arab stallions had been relegated to a corner of the stables and eventually given as presents to members of the Court, who had in turn disposed of them.

And so Sham, that desert prince, the descendant of an ancestor known as Wings of the Wind, a present from a Mohammedan sovereign to King Louis, had ended up between the shafts of a watercart in the rue Croulebarde.

At this time he was six years old. Though he had begun life in so high a position, had suffered so many vicissitudes and fallen so low, his true destiny was in fact only just beginning.

He had crossed the Mediterranean in a Barbary galley but he was to cross the Channel in a good round ship; he had known the sands of Africa and the cobbles of Paris but he was to tread the soft turf of England.

In London, Mr. Coke frequented St. James's Street Coffee House, which was the fashionable resort of gamblers and racing men. Its proprietor, Mr. Roger Williams, owned racehorses himself.

Mr. Coke was rather embarrassed by his purchase. He had yielded to sudden impulse, to curiosity, and also perhaps to a

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desire to astonish. He had a good story to tell, but no idea what to do with the horse that had knocked him down. He sold Sham for twenty guineas to Mr. Roger Williams, who put the young stallion out to grass for some time.

The desert prince began to look like his real self. He filled out, and once again had a long flowing mane, a magnificent tail that fanned the ground, a big handsome croup, chiselled muscles, and silky coat, which was of such an intense black that it looked almost blue in the sunlight.

Horse racing had already become very fashionable in England; indeed, had been so for some thirty years. The ideal horse at that time was still very similar to the medieval warhorse: tall, heavy, strong enough to carry a great weight of armour, it made a noise like an avalanche when it galloped.

Mr. Williams of the St. James's Street Coffee House enjoyed a joke.

" I'm going to run The Nigger," he said, for that was the name he had given Sham.

But Sham had a sense of humour too. Taken to the race-course, he refused to start. Pressed a little too roughly with the spurs, he reared, bucked, threw his jockey and, shaking his long mane, galloped back to his stable.

Two or three more attempts were made, but in vain. The horse had no competitive spirit. In training, and when alone, he promised wonderfully well and moved over the grass gallops like a black arrow; but as soon as he was matched against those big competitors he seemed outraged and became a danger to anyone who went near him.

" A bad business," said Mr. Williams, as had said King Louis XV, the Master of the Horse, the Versailles grooms, the water-seller, and Mr. Coke before him.

Mr. Williams was delighted to hand Sham over to one of his customers, Lord Godolphin, contenting himself with a small profit. The deal was made for twenty-five guineas.

To Lord Godolphin, formerly Keeper of the Privy Purse and Member of Parliament for Oxford, now a member of the House of Lords and son-in-law to the first Duke of Marlborough whose daughter, Lady Henrietta Churchill, he had married, twenty-five guineas was a mere trifle, as indeed were a hundred or a thousand when it was a question of a horse. This highly civilised man had two passions, chess and racing; the second was to ruin him. He kept a large racing-stable in Cambridgeshire; Sham was merely an exotic fancy.

" I'll send The Nigger to Gog Magog," Lord Godolphin

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had decided, for it was on the Gog Magog hills that his stables stood.

It is in the nature of the female to have a taste for the strange and the unusual, to be attracted by the foreign. The arrival of this handsome Oriental created a certain stir among the mares at Gog Magog. Seeing his fillies raise their heads and spread their nostrils wide as Sham went by, Lord Godolphin gave orders that the horse should earn his corn as a teaser.

And for several months the horse, who was already known by the name of the Godolphin Arabian, that is Lord Godolphin's Arab, was employed in this way.

When nuptials had been decided on at Gog Magog, the desert prince was brought to the mare to flirt with her and put her in the mood for love. And when the mare, charmed by the little black horse, seemed sufficiently disposed, the master stallion, the king of the stud, the great Hobgoblin, was brought to her. Complacent, huge, important, strutting a little in his fat, he came forward to do his duty as a sire with the minimum of effort. And the Godolphin Arabian had to retire before this imposing grandee whose pleasure he had prepared for him.

So humiliating a retreat was intolerable to so lively a horse, whose blood was accustomed to conquest, and who had developed so great a sense of his own honour; but a rein, firmly held by Lord Godolphin's stable lads, forced him away to a respectful distance.

Things went on like this till the day, the most memorable in the whole history of racehorses, when a superb blonde, a golden chestnut, still very young but of opulent build, nervous and anxious at being taken to her first nuptials, appeared before the Godolphin Arabian. Her name was Roxana.

Though she came from the royal stud—Lord Godolphin had paid sixty guineas for her—it did not prevent her from immediately falling in love with the Oriental teaser. More intuitive no doubt than men, she had recognised royal blood in the Godolphin Arabian. And the desert prince from the very first moment showed a compelling and impetuous passion for the fair Roxana—a passion such as he had never shown before.

There began a quivering dance of love between the two horses, an exotic ballet of seduction such as only animals—bees flying through the sunlight to celebrate their union, the gambols of dragonflies mirrored in water, birds parading their colours—know how to achieve.

At the very moment Roxana was tremblingly about to yield, the huge Hobgoblin was led up as usual. But the little black

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horse turned mad with rage and, rearing up, went for his rival, his hooves beating the air. The stable lads clung vainly to the rein; the Godolphin Arabian broke the leather, and the battle began. The frightened lads dared not interfere, for it would have been at the risk of their lives.

The straw flew, the wooden partitions resounded to the drumming hooves, and a cloud of dust half concealed the fighting stallions. The great Hobgoblin was unaccustomed to such treatment and unprepared for such an attack. He reared up heavily; but he was too slow to meet the furious, whirlwind assault of his slender adversary.

With hooves and teeth the Godolphin Arabian killed the huge Hobgoblin within a few minutes.

The David of horses had destroyed the Goliath. No one dared stand in his way as he broke down the doors and galloped to freedom, taking with him the beautiful Roxana, whose love he had won for ever by his victory. Their pounding hooves crashed across the yard as they fled together to the neighbouring woods.

They were found that same night, happy and a little tired. They were quiet again now as they nuzzled each other, the fair Roxana's head against her conqueror's black chest.

The stable was far from proud of itself. How was Lord Godolphin to be told that his best stallion was dead and his most promising and valuable filly gone off to honeymoon in the woods with The Nigger?

But Lord Godolphin had not only a taste for the eccentric but a sense of honour too. The story of the fight delighted him and, in spite of the damage done, his Arab horse rose in his esteem.

"We shall just wait and see what this produces," Lord Godolphin said.

And the product of this romantic mating was a horse called Lath, who was born in 1732 and, from his first appearance on a racecourse, carried all before him. Such speed and stamina had never been seen before. His heavy competitors struggled along twenty lengths behind him. The love-child was invincible. And with him that race of horses so oddly called "English thoroughbred" was born.

The Godolphin Arabian was relieved of his role of teaser. Everyone feared he might commit another murder. And Roxana, for her part, refused any other mate; she would belong to the Godolphin Arabian alone.

The two horses seemed unhappy when they were apart; they

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turned sad and nervous and went off their feed. They had to be put in neighbouring boxes and, since Roxana became restive at any other stallion's approach, a second mating was decided on. Roxana was undoubtedly the mate of a single horse.

They had but few children, since the splendid chestnut mare died, alas, ten days after producing her second foal, in 1734. But they had many wonderful grandchildren.

After Roxana's death the Godolphin Arabian had still nearly twenty years to live. He was a widower, not inconsolable perhaps, but melancholy. He had several wives, and each time was born a horse famous either because of its own triumphs or because of its line.

The Godolphin Arabian, the Gog Magog stallion, had become famous throughout England. His master gave him a Moorish groom who had no other duty but to see to him. Nevertheless, the stallion was of a solitary disposition. He seemed to take no pleasure in any companion other than a little tabby cat, called Grimalkin, who lived in his box, slept between his legs and, during the day, purred upon his back.

When the Godolphin Arabian began to grow old, he was taken to the course on racing days, splendidly harnessed in the Oriental manner and with his Moorish groom, wearing a turban, on his back, so that he might witness the triumphs of his descendants, though he had never raced himself. The horse that had cost only seventy-five francs had already won, through his descendants, tens of thousands of pounds. The punters saluted him; the children surrounded and acclaimed him. Tossing his fine little head and long mane, he pawed the ground and whisked his tail, pretending to impatience while allowing himself to be admired like an old king.

When he died at over twenty-nine, an exceptional age for a horse, he was buried in the stables of Gog Magog, in the passage between the boxes, at the very place from which he had fled to the woods with the blonde Roxana.

On his tombstone his name was graven and chains were placed round it. Both the Moorish groom and the cat Grimalkin died in the following month.

Two centuries have gone by . . . The arched doorway is still there by which the two frenzied lovers fled. I have walked in the wood that was the scene of their love.

A striped ginger cat with gold eyes lives in the stables, haunts the box in which the Godolphin Arabian lived, and walks delicately over the graven stone.

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Translated from the French by Humphrey Hare, from "The Black Prince and Other Stories"

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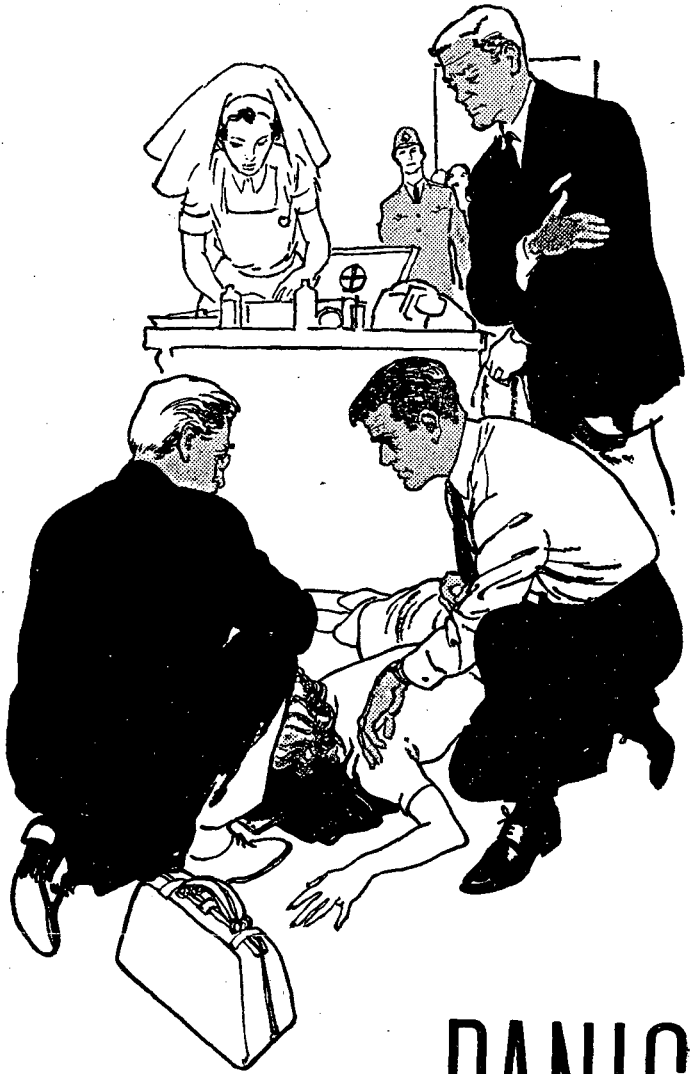

PANIC

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Exciting! Dramatic!

from THE MIDTOWN BOMBER

A GOOD many people saw Roy Clark enter Gale's Store with the parcel. Others shared the lift that took him to the eighth floor, and still others brushed against him as he walked down the corridor towards the offices of Barry Strand, the store detective and security officer.

He wore ordinary clothes—a dark suit, a grey topcoat, a grey hat. He was middle-aged. There was nothing remarkable about his face or his physical appearance. He did not hurry, he did not loiter and he did not appear furtive. He was just another man carrying a parcel through Gale's during the Christmas shopping season. He was sure he would not be remembered.

His only moment of real danger would come when he left the parcel. But it was not a danger he had to risk blindly. He knew that Clancy Evans, Barry Strand's secretary, took a tea break at two thirty each afternoon, and that if Barry was in he would probably be at his desk in an inner room behind a closed door.

Should these conditions not prevail, he would know at a glance and would continue down the corridor, unnoticed, to return another day.

Clancy Evans was not at her desk. The office was open and empty. Roy Clark placed the parcel on the corner of the desk, turned and left without haste. Again he was seen by many people; again he was not concerned. Except for the hard brightness that had come to his eyes and the sweat that filmed his face, he was a man like a thousand others. He took the escalator to the third floor. He bought a tie and some handkerchiefs—and he waited.

Clancy discovered the parcel a few minutes before three. She was puzzled at first but after glancing at the label on the wrapping paper she was only amused. It was a two-pound box of chocolates and Barry's name was written on it in pencil.

Clancy was twenty-three, small and dark. She dressed rather plainly—as secretary to the man in charge of the store security, she felt a certain restraint was necessary—but she could not hide the lines of a very good figure or cool the warmth of a pleasant personality. She was a happy person; it glowed in her face and shone in her eyes.

She put paper and carbon into her typewriter and began a letter, typing rapidly. But her eyes kept straying back to the parcel; the smile, half wonder, half anticipation, kept returning to her lips. The inner door was closed, which meant Barry was occupied, but

by John and Ward Hawkins

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it didn't mean he was seriously occupied. Clancy went to the door and knocked quietly. "Very busy?" she asked.

"Not too busy," Barry said. "Come in."

He was at his desk, a raw-boned, sandy-haired man of thirty. The lines at the corners of his mouth said he smiled easily and often, and there was that about him that told of quiet, unassuming, confident strength. He had dark grey eyes and big-knuckled, seemingly clumsy hands.

"It isn't really important," Clancy said.

Barry smiled. "But it is something?"

Clancy was concerned about the young girl who was sitting in the chair beside Barry's desk. The chair was most often occupied, in such instances, by a shoplifter, but Clancy couldn't bring herself to believe this youngster was a thief. She was about fourteen, hardly more than a child. Still, Clancy could not doubt that something was very wrong. There was fear in the child's eyes; her mouth was tragic.

"This is Sue, Clancy." Barry's voice was without strain. "She's a friend of mine. Sue, this is Miss Evans, my secretary." Then he smiled. "In about two weeks, Miss Evans will be my wife."

"Oh, wonderful!" A brief smile touched the girl's lips. "Are you going to be married at Christmas?"

"Sometime after the Christmas rush and before the January sale," Clancy said. "We hope!"

"Do you doubt me, woman?" Barry asked with mock severity. "I'm a man who keeps his promises."

"Unhappily," Clancy said, "you're not the man in charge of Gale's Store."

"I salute Gale's," Barry said, and did exactly that with a flick of his fingers. "I think Mr. Cramer will allow two faithful employees time off for a short honeymoon." He looked at the girl. "What do you think?"

"I certainly hope so."

Clancy understood that Barry was including the girl in the discussion for some reason of his own, probably to dispel the look of tragedy she had worn a moment ago. She decided that mention of the parcel might help things along.

"Barry," she said, "someone left you a Christmas present."

"Oh? What kind of present?"

"A parcel." Clancy smiled at him. "A box of chocolates, I think. It's got that look about it."

Barry looked at Clancy. "So why don't you open it?"

"It's got your name on it."

"You're my secretary. You open my post," Barry said. "If you're going to be my wife, you'll have to share the chores as well as the blessings." He grinned. "It can wait a few minutes. We're about through. I'll come out and open it for you."

Clancy winked at the girl. And she left the office, closing the door behind her.

"How about it?" Barry asked the girl. "Am I lucky?"

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" Yes," she said. " Very lucky."

" Beautiful and smart." Barry's smile did pleasant things for his eyes. " She'll open the parcel. I said she could. She won't be able to resist it."

" I couldn't either," the girl said.

Barry's hand had been cupped all this time, covering an object that lay on his desk blotter. Now he opened the drawer of his desk, swept the object into it, and closed the drawer. Then he smiled at the girl.

" That's the end of it," he said. " I won't tell anyone, and you don't have to. We'll pretend it never happened."

The girl was uncertain. " But I took the brooch. I—"

Barry nodded. " You took it. You put it in your bag and you walked out without paying for it. I stopped you on the pavement and brought you up here. But that doesn't make you a thief. It makes you a foolish girl who had to try stealing just once."

" I feel like a thief."

" It's good that you do—today," Barry said. " But only for today. Tomorrow, tell yourself it's over and done. Say ' Never again! ' Say you're a good and decent girl, and you will be. How can I tell? "

" I—I don't know."

" Because I've been a cop for a long time," he said. " I've known a lot of thieves. I know what goes on inside their heads. You're not like them; you don't even come close."

Her eyes suddenly filled with tears.

He stood up and she got up with him. He held out a hand, big and hard-knuckled, and she put a small, hesitant hand inside it. They were standing there when the blast came.

It was a thunderclap of sound, deep-voiced, powerful. It was a battering force that struck the office door a heavy hammer blow and shook the floor beneath their feet. It was stunning. It emptied the minds of Barry and the girl for a fraction of a moment, then flooded their minds with fear and horror. The girl began to scream. Barry, in his horror, was paralysed and unbelieving. Then suddenly he did believe and was able to move again.

Barry lunged at the door and found it somehow jammed. He heaved at it with all the strength of his shoulders, fought it, and finally won. The door came open; he pushed into the office beyond. Dust and smoke were a thick cloud, obscuring almost everything, filling his lungs, choking him. He yelled, " Clancy! " and was seized by a spasm of coughing. He could not find her at once. Inside his office, the girl was still screaming, senselessly. Her need and her danger were forced upon Barry's consciousness. If there were a fire, the inner office would be a trap. He went back for her, caught her up in his arms and carried her through Clancy's office to the outer door. He almost threw her into the arms of men who had already gathered there, faces white and frightened.

He yelled at them, " She's all right—take her! And stay out! "

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He turned back in search of Clancy. And he found her. There was a small space between her desk and the single window of her office—a window without glass now—and she was crumpled on the floor there, jammed between desk and wall, one leg oddly bent, her face hidden by an arm. There was the reek of burnt hair, of burnt clothing, of burnt flesh. She was still, still as death, but she was not dead. He found a pulse beat; her chest moved. Barry lifted her arm away from her face, then swore in pain and anguish. Clancy's face was bleeding and badly injured.

A voice behind Barry said, "Barry—good lord, man—what happened?"

The voice belonged to Bob Lee, one of Barry's staff. He had come running at the sound of the blast. Now his youthful face was vapid with shock.

"Clancy's hurt!" Barry said hoarsely. "Get Dr. Whitney—and an ambulance. Quick!" Then, remembering his job, "Block off that passage—let no one in here!"

Barry tried to free Clancy from the cramped corner. The oddly-bent leg was obviously broken, and there could very well be more serious injuries. He had to use the greatest care. He knelt down beside her. Controlling the shaking in his hands, he gently lifted her shoulders so that she could lie at full length on the floor. When Dr. Whitney, the store medical officer, and a nurse came, her head was on Barry's coat and Barry was holding a handkerchief as a compress against her bleeding face.

"All right," Dr. Whitney snapped. "Get up!"

The doctor was past sixty, a lean, bent-shouldered hawk of a man. Irascible always, he was never more caustic than when he was deeply disturbed. The doctor caught Barry's shoulder with an impatient hand.

"Up, damn it!" And when Barry came erect, he was turned to face the window. "Stay there," the doctor said. "Don't turn round until I tell you to."

Barry did as he'd been told. He listened to the sounds behind him: the clicking of instruments, the terse commands of the doctor, the soft voice of his nurse. He stood in that position for a long time. . .

The ambulance came screaming through the traffic below, and presently the voices of the men who had come with it were in the room. There were as many people inside as Dr. Whitney would allow. A uniformed policeman took up the duty of guarding the door. He turned away men of the fire department, other police, and when the store's chief executive, John Cramer, came, he was allowed only a brief glance inside and then was sent away.

Through it all, Barry held his position at the window. He waited until a hand touched his arm.

"Barry," the nurse said. "They're going to take her away now. Do you want to see her before she goes?"

Barry turned slowly, wincing again at the shambles that was the

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office. Plaster had come down from the ceiling and off the walls, powdering everything with a coat of white. The air still held the acrid smell of explosives.

Clancy was lying on a stretcher, blanket-wrapped, her head and face lost in a swathing of bandages. The two men from the ambulance were tucking the blankets carefully round her; Dr. Whitney hovered near, raspingly demanding greater care. There was nothing to see of Clancy except the outline of her head and body.

" She's still unconscious," Dr. Whitney said. " Don't try to talk to her, Barry. *And don't touch her.*" He looked at the ambulance men. " You two—are you going to take her out? "

The ambulance men lifted the stretcher easily, smoothly, and carried it through the door. Dr. Whitney followed, bag in hand. Barry moved after him, and the doctor stopped.

" Where d'you think you're going? "

" With you," Barry said. " To the hospital."

" To serve what useful purpose? "

Angrily Barry said, " She's practically my wife! She—"

" She's badly hurt," Dr. Whitney said. " How badly I can't say until I've made a complete examination. Do you intend to sit in the waiting-room, hounding the nurses, hounding me for the next few hours? "

" Damn it, Doctor! I—"

" Or are you going to find the man or the woman who did this to her? "

" I'll find him! " Barry said.

" I suggest you begin at once."

" Doctor," Barry said, " I've got to know. Can you make a guess? "

Dr. Whitney stared into Barry's eyes. " Guesses are for fools," he said quietly. " I'm a doctor." He walked away from Barry. At the door he turned. " With prayers enough," he said quietly, " she may live."

Barry raised a white-knuckled fist. He stood there for a moment, fist raised, face white. With an effort, he opened his fist and shoved the hand into a trouser pocket. " Do your best for her," he said.

A lift took Clancy to the ground floor. She was carried through the store to the street and loaded into an ambulance. People watched, some staring in silent sympathy, some whispering excitedly. Roy Clark watched from the fringe of the crowd on the pavement. He was not disappointed or angry to see that it was a woman on the stretcher and not a man. He was only surprised. He turned and walked away. . .

Barry faced three men who came into the shambles that was Clancy's office. They were members of the city police: Captain Paul Gabrino and two men in plain clothes, Peter Calavan and Jim DeRose. Barry had served six years with the city police and he knew the men, but he didn't greet them. He went past them to the door and found Bob Lee, young face strained and anxious, waiting in the hall.

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" Get my staff up here," he said. " All of them."

Barry turned back to the office. The two plainclothes men were already at work, hunting carefully through the debris. Captain Gabrino was waiting in the inner office. Barry retrieved his coat from the rubble on the floor and joined him there. He shook the plaster from his coat and rubbed at the dark stain that Clancy's head had left on the shoulder.

Captain Gabrino said, " A hell of a thing, Barry."

Gabrino was a huge, shambling man whose tie was never quite straight, whose shirt was never quite tucked in. He had thinning dark hair, and dark eyes set in a round face. His nose was bulbous, almost clownlike, but there was none of the clown in Gabrino. He was competent and he was honest.

" The girl? " he said. " They tell me you were going to be married—that right? "

" That's right," Barry said.

Gabrino made a small, desolate sound.

" She's going to be all right. She's got to be! "

" Sure." There was hurt in Gabrino's eyes.

Barry crumpled the coat and threw it in a chair. He was a moment looking at it, fighting for control. When he turned back to Gabrino, his lean face was stiff, his dark grey eyes were almost black. " Whatever happens," he said, " I want the man who did this to her. I want my hands on him! "

" No," Gabrino said quietly. " You want him in gaol."

" That was the girl I love he almost killed." Barry Strand's voice was hoarse. " Gaol isn't enough for a man like that. He's got to pay blood for blood and broken bones for broken bones. You should have seen her."

" I've seen others—gunshot, knives, cars," Gabrino said. " They're never pretty. Our job is always the same. We bring in whoever's responsible. The courts take it from there."

" Not this time! "

" Every time," Gabrino said. " This is no exception."

The two men stared at each other, eyes locked. Gabrino won the contest of wills, but not because Barry was ready to agree that the law had the first right to the man who had made the bomb. Gabrino had the weight of authority behind him; he had all the facilities of the police department at his disposal, and Barry wanted the use of them.

" All right, Paul."

Gabrino said, " That's better."

The members of Barry's staff, in charge of daytime security, filed into the small office—four women and two men. They had one important thing in common—they did not look like police officers. Two of the women were middle-aged, almost dowdy; one was slimly handsome, beautifully dressed; and the fourth a girl who could pass as a pony-tailed teenager. The men were Bob Lee and Jacob Farrar. There was concern in every face.

" How badly was Clancy hurt? " the girl asked.

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" We don't know yet," Barry said. " But it was no accident. It was a bomb—a bomb with my name on it." Barry's voice sharpened.

" Clancy Evans opened it. Whether it was intended for me personally or for me as head of security is still a question. We don't know who sent it or why, but we're going to find out." He paused, then said, " With the help of the police of course."

" Do any of you know a likely suspect, someone with a motive? "

They were silent.

" We start from scratch," Barry said. " The bomb came in— " The telephone on his desk interrupted him; he caught it up quickly.

" Strand speaking."

Mrs. Baker, John Cramer's secretary, was on the line. " Mr. Cramer wants you in his office, Barry. Right away."

" As soon as I can, Mrs. Baker."

" It's very important."

" It'll have to wait," Barry said. He replaced the instrument and turned to face his staff again. " The bomb came into Clancy's office between two thirty and three. We have no description of the person, man or woman, who left it. I'd say it was a man—a bomb is hardly a woman's weapon. He must have been seen by quite a few people. He may have acted in a way that would cause someone to remember him. The employees on this floor are the best bet. Talk to them first, then to everyone else you can. Eileen will stay to take Clancy's place, and the rest of you can get started."

Eileen, the young pony-tailed and dark-eyed blonde who could pass for a teenager, remained; the others moved out. To the young woman Barry said, " The first job will be to get Clancy's files back in shape as soon as the officers are through. See if there's anything you can do now." When she had gone, Barry sat for a moment, staring at nothing; then he struck his desk with the heel of his hand. " Paul," he said, " we've got so little to go on! "

" You're going—that's the main thing." There was approval in Gabrino's eyes. " And I've got an army ready to go as soon as I've got the whole picture. So fill in all the details for me."

" I've just been over it—that's all I know."

" Knowing how you know might help," Gabrino said. " How do you know the bomb arrived between two thirty and three? How d'you know it had your name on it? How d'you know Clancy opened it? "

Barry swore at himself. Gabrino started at the beginning and Gabrino missed nothing—Gabrino was a competent police officer.

He told Gabrino what had happened before the explosion, checking the facts against conclusions as he talked, his scowl deepening.

" I didn't see the parcel when I brought the girl in here at two thirty," he said. " Clancy came in at three to say it was there. So the time looks pretty good." He lifted a hand stiffly. " But the rest—I'm out in thin air. I don't know that the parcel was the

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bomb. I don't know that Clancy opened it. The bomb could have been tossed in the doorway; it could have been planted and timed. I'm guessing, and guesses are no good!"

"It's a reasonable guess," Gabrino said. "We'll work on it until the lab tells us something different. So we come to this: who wants you dead, Barry? And why?"

"I don't know," Barry said. "I've got enemies, of course. I'm a detective—it's the nature of the work. But a revenge angle doesn't make a lot of sense. Where's the profit?" He rubbed at the back of his neck. "A lunatic, Paul?"

"It's a possibility," Gabrino agreed.

"Here's something else," Barry said. "He put my name on the parcel—he knows me. It could mean I know him."

"He might only know about you."

"As head of security," Barry said. "Could be."

"But it's a lead," Gabrino said. "It narrows the field. We'd better check your arrests, from the first one to the last."

"Good!" Barry said. Here was a course of action, and action was what he wanted. "As soon as the files are in order I'll . . ."

The telephone rang again. And again it was Mrs. Baker, pleading in her voice, "Barry, for heaven's sake!"

"Can't it wait, Joan? I'm trying to get started. I—"

"Not another minute, Barry."

Barry's hand whitened on the instrument. Then he said, "I'll be right up," and dropped the telephone back in the cradle, impatient anger darkening his face. He had been a departmental head just eighteen months, he was young for the job and he was not secure enough to defy Cramer. Cramer had been known to fire men for no more than implied insubordination.

"Cramer wants me," he said to Gabrino. He took his coat from the chair. "I'll make it short."

"Don't rush it," Gabrino said. "We've a long way to go. And don't go in wearing that face. You don't want to lose your job."

"That would kill me," Barry said. He put his coat on, then paused in the doorway. "You can come up with a list of arrests I made while I was in the force. Can you start checking?"

"Can and will." Gabrino reached for the telephone.

The eighth floor of Gale's was used almost exclusively for offices—accounting, credit management, advertising, and the like—necessary to the front-line operation of the store.

But John Cramer's offices were not here. He was chief executive and major shareholder of Gale's; his offices were in a penthouse on the roof. They were modern, but not offensively so. Quiet elegance was the motif.

Mrs. Joan Baker, Cramer's secretary, sat at a desk in the outer office, a greyhaired, full-bodied woman. She looked at the set of Barry's face, and her eyes darkened with real concern. "I'm sorry about Clancy," she said. "Mr. Cramer has ordered everything to be done for her that can possibly be done."

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" I know he has." Barry came to her desk. " Have you heard anything from the hospital, from Dr. Whitney? "

" Nothing," she said. " They're to telephone me. I'll get word to you. If you hear first, get word to me." She frowned then. " You'd better go in, Barry. He's fuming."

Barry went past her desk. In the distance between her desk and the inner door, his taut face lost all expression. There was no anger, no resentment, no subservience—nothing. He opened the door. John Cramer was standing at a window. He turned slowly to look at Barry with level eyes.

" You are not prompt, Strand," he said.

Cramer moved to stand behind his desk. The man wore authority like a cloak. He was small. He had a wide, dark, neatly trimmed moustache beneath a prominent nose. His chin was of no consequence, his lips were rather full, but his widely spaced dark eyes spoke correctly of intelligence and a near inflexible will.

Abruptly he said, " What happened downstairs? "

" A bomb came into my office," Barry said. " It exploded with Miss Evans in the room. Miss Evans was seriously injured. There was considerable damage done to her office."

" This much I know."

" Yes, sir."

" I want to know more than that."

" I can't tell you more," Barry said quietly. " I don't know any more."

Cramer's dark eyes held Barry's, hunting insolence and finding none. Barry was speaking the truth.

Cramer said, " I want to be kept fully informed. Submit a complete report each day to Mrs. Baker. Advise her immediately of any important development."

" Yes, sir."

Now Cramer's eyes became critical, speculative. It was as if he had not seen Barry for a long time and felt the need of a reappraisal.

Then slowly he said, " It wouldn't be fair to hold you in any way responsible for what has happened. At least, not until we're in possession of more facts. But neither would it be fair to let you think you're not under close scrutiny."

" Scrutiny I don't mind," Barry said. " But the implication troubles me. In what possible way could I be responsible? "

" Every department head is responsible for what happens within his department," Cramer said. " More ability, more experience might have prevented the accident. A better man might have seen warnings, or might not have created the circumstances that brought it about. We'll see what the facts prove. Are you going to make an effort to find whoever planted the bomb? "

" Yes, sir! "

Cramer's full lips pursed. " I'm not sure that's wise—it seems a job for the city police." Then he shrugged. " We were attacked, and reprisal is indicated. I suppose we must take an active part."

" I think so."

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Cramer's eyes narrowed a little. "But let me warn you: be very careful. We're well into the Christmas season. Anything that causes unfavourable publicity, fear in the public mind, or even concern will hurt sales. The explosion in your office caused all these things. The loss must be charged to your department."

Barry set his jaws against a protest.

"Yes, sir."

"We'll accept the loss," Cramer said. "But we won't accept further loss. Every possible means is now being used to minimise the incident. The arrest of the culprit is important, but my primary concern is that the public forget as quickly as possible that it ever happened. Should you, or your department, do anything to cause further adverse publicity—anything at all—you'll be relieved. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir," Barry said.

And he found his way out. When the door had closed behind him, he put a hand to his face and found it wet with sweat. He looked at Mrs. Baker and shook his head. "That one," he said. "That louse—"

"Not entirely," Mrs. Baker said. "Clancy is to have the best of everything at his expense. And I've just finished typing an invitation. Clancy's to convalesce at his country place."

"But Gale's comes first," Barry said.

"Yes," Mrs. Baker said. "And last."

There were no reporters in the corridor outside Barry's office when he got there. Even the policeman who had been on guard duty was gone. Gabrino was at Barry's desk, the telephone in his hand. He was listening a lot, saying little. His round face was flushed; there was anger in his dark eyes.

"That was the chief," he told Barry. "I suppose we've both been given the same briefing—find whoever planted the bomb but keep quiet about it? One wrong move and I'm out."

Barry nodded. "And I'll be out too."

He looked at the telephone, wanting it to ring. He reached for it, and Gabrino shook his head.

"I have just checked," he said. "Nothing yet."

"Thanks." Barry made fists of his hands, then opened them. "What'd you find out about the bomb? Or were your lads run out before they found anything?"

"They went at it quietly; they finished before they left," Gabrino said. "The bomb was in a box, probably the chocolate box. The heart of it was a twelve-gauge shotgun shell. When the top of the box was lifted, a spring-driven firing pin was released to strike the shotgun shell."

"A twelve-gauge didn't blow up that office," Barry said.

"Not without help," Gabrino agreed. "Take the shot and wads out of a new shotgun shell and you've got room for nitroglycerine. The shotgun shell was the detonator."

Barry set his jaw. "Any more?"

"The lab boys are working on the pieces of the bomb," Gabrino

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said, " but I don't think they're going to tell us much. The pieces are brass, hand-worked. Practically any do-it-yourself character could put it together. We have no note—no paper sample or typewriter we can track down. And no handwriting." He spread his hands. " We haven't much to go on."

" We've got the fact that nobody blows up a stranger for fun," Barry said. " Whoever planted that bomb knows me or knows about me. He's got a grudge against me or the store, or he's trying to make money out of this in some way."

Barry stopped there, eyes bright with thought. He turned to the doorway. " Eileen! "

She was there instantly. " Yes? "

" Scoot over to the Complaints Department," Barry said. " Tell them I'm looking for a man with a grudge against the store. An eccentric probably, one with mechanical ability. Get them to make up a list of everyone who comes anywhere near this description."

Gabrino said, " And bring me half a dozen names as soon as you can get them. I'll put my people to work." He looked at Barry. " What about Personnel? A man can get sore about losing his job."

" That, too," Barry agreed. " Eileen, you stay with Complaints until you get Gabrino's short list. I'll call Personnel." When the girl had gone, he made the call and got a promise of immediate action. He turned a sober face to Gabrino. " We've not reached a dead end yet. We've got a lot of roads we can go down."

" Long, crooked roads," Gabrino said. " But we'll get there. Remember Peter Reels? You put him and his wife away for shoplifting. His wife died in prison; he's been on the street two weeks. A real savage. My men are looking for him."

" What about Jerry Price? There's another." Barry went into Clancy's office and came back with an armful of files. " We can pick out a dozen here in five minutes, Paul. Give a hand."

They had worked a long while, but they were not finished when the telephone rang. Gabrino answered it. " For you," he said.

" Barry." It was Dr. Whitney's voice. " I want you to come to the hospital at once."

Fear grabbed at Barry. " What is it? Is she—? "

" She'll live," the doctor said quickly. " She's conscious now and she's in considerable pain. She doesn't want sedation until she's talked to you. I'm agreeing to this. But not for long! So you'd better hurry."

" Be right there! " Barry slammed the receiver down.

They arrived at the hospital in fifteen minutes.

Clancy was lying on a bed, attended by two nurses. She was moving with her pain, not much, but constantly, and held from greater movement by the nurses who stood beside her. The dark fluid of life dripped from a suspended bottle through a tube to a vein in her arm. Her head, the upper part of her face to the level of her mouth, was wrapped in bandages. Below the bandages, her

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mouth was cruelly bruised and swollen. Her breathing was quick and shallow, almost gasping.

Dr. Whitney had said she would live, but without that assurance Barry would not have believed it. The feeling, the look, the sounds of mortal injury were here. He crossed to the bed quickly, but on soundless feet. He took her hand gently and forced a quiet, comforting note into his voice.

" Sweetheart—it's Barry."

She made a small moaning sound of relief. Her fingers closed desperately on his hand. She tried to rise, swinging her head in the blind way of a sightless person, then tried to turn towards him. The nurse's hand held her firm. Barry bent quickly to put his face close to the bandages.

" Don't move, darling."

" They said you were all right." Her voice was faint, distorted by swollen lips. " Is it true, Barry? Is it? "

" It's true," he said.

" Oh, thank you, Lord." She squeezed Barry's hand. " I prayed, Barry. My prayer was answered."

" It was answered," Barry said. " And I'll pray that you'll get well very soon. Now you've got to rest and sleep."

" Not yet! " There was strength in her thin protest. " You've got to know what happened—so you can find who did it. I work for you—I've got to report—"

" Easy," he said. " Easy does it."

" It was a chocolate box." She spoke in quick little bursts, taking small breaths between them. " It had your name written on it in pencil. I opened it . . . I'm glad you didn't—"

And Barry swore silently.

" When I started to open it," she said, " I could feel a spring pushing against the top, like—like a jack-in-the-box. I—I thought something was going to jump out, so I threw it away from me. Then—then it happened. That's all I know. Does it help at all? "

" It helps a lot," Barry said. " Now Dr. Whitney's going to give you something to make you sleep."

Panic came into her voice. " Don't—don't go yet! Hold me first—please! " Barry held her as best he could.

" Barry," she whispered, " am I going to be all right? "

" You're going to be fine. Dr. Whitney says so."

" I mean—we can't be married if I'm crippled and ugly. I'd die before I'd let you be ashamed of me."

" You'll be all right," Barry said desperately. " And you know it wouldn't make any difference. I'm in love with you, not the way you look! "

" It would make a difference! " she said. " To me, it would make all the difference." She put her bruised lips against his face. " Oh, Barry, it's so dark in here . . ."

In the hallway, with the door closed, standing with Gabrino and Dr. Whitney, Barry could not control the working of his hands. His voice was rough. " Doctor," he said, " you heard her.

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What's the answer? Is she coming through this unscarred?"

"With capable plastic surgery, the scars will be inconspicuous, but—" The doctor searched helplessly for the right words. "There's only one way to say it. I can't ease the blow."

"Say it."

"I don't think she'll see again."

Softly Barry said, "Somebody's going to die for this."

Gale's Store was open and usually crowded until late each evening during the Christmas season. It was reasonable to expect that Barry Strand would be at his desk, or immediately available. The explosion only strengthened the assumption.

Roy Clark placed his call from a public call box at nine o'clock and got through to Barry Strand almost at once.

"Mr. Strand," he said. His quiet, precise voice held a trace of New England accent. "Did you know the bomb that exploded in your office was intended for you?"

"Yes, I did."

Clark smiled at the sudden tenseness in Barry Strand's voice. He wet his lips, waiting.

"How did you know?" Barry asked.

"I sent you the bomb, Mr. Strand. I sent it to you because I wanted to make the strongest possible show of force. You're the head of store security, the heart of the enemy strength, so to speak. Do you agree?"

"I agree. Now tell me why."

"I want one hundred thousand dollars, Mr. Strand," Clark said. "Mr. Cramer—Gale's—can well afford it. If I'm not paid, another, much bigger bomb will be exploded in the store in one of the busiest sections during one of the busiest hours. A number of people will be killed, many more injured. You couldn't prevent me doing it, especially now. This is the season for parcels, isn't it? How many thousands of people are entering the store each day with parcels?"

"You couldn't!" Barry Strand said. "For the love of heaven! It would be the cruellest slaughter!"

"True," Clark said quietly. "And Mr. Cramer would be responsible. A hundred thousand dollars is nothing to him."

"He'll pay, I'm sure of that."

Clark shifted the receiver from hand to hand, smiling at the forced quiet of Barry Strand's voice, the desperately gentle voice one uses with the insane.

"You can't hope to win," Barry Strand said. "Every police officer in the city is looking for you. I'm looking for you. We'll find you; be sure of that." He paused, wetting his lips. "Look—I know your voice. I've heard it before. It won't take me long to put a name to it."

"All things in life are a gamble, Mr. Strand," Clark said. "I'm willing to gamble with you. Inform Mr. Cramer of my demands. I'll call again with instructions for delivery."

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"For your own sake, come in now," Barry Strand said. "I tell you I know your voice. Listen—"

"I've finished listening," Clark said.

He hung up and left the booth. His eyes were very bright; his face was filmed with sweat. But he was not afraid. Excited, yes, but not afraid. Barry Strand had heard his voice, but that had been long ago and for only a few moments.

Barry sat very still. He was trying to listen to the voice in his memory, face taut with concentration. He had heard the voice before; he knew the man. The man's face, the man's name were there, tantalisingly just beyond reach. He strained after them. He tried too hard, and excitement flooded his mind and even the voice was gone.

He wiped his sweating face, sick with disappointment. He turned to the telephone again. He called John Cramer's office.

"Joan, has Mr. Cramer left the building yet?"

"Over an hour ago, Barry."

"We have to get in touch with him at once," Barry said. "The man who planted the bomb has just called me. We've got an extortionist on our hands. The bomb in Clancy's office was a demonstration of what he can do. He wants a hundred thousand dollars or he'll explode a bomb in one of the busiest sections during store hours."

Mrs. Baker gasped, "Oh no!"

"Yes, Joan." Barry waited a moment, hearing nothing. Then he said, "I'll call Mr. Cramer, if you'd rather."

Mrs. Baker found her voice. "No, I'll do it."

"I'll wait in my office," Barry said. "We'll have to have the police in on this. Gabrino, at least, though I'd guess Mr. Cramer will want the high brass. In any case, let's keep the group small. Will you suggest that to Mr. Cramer?"

The meeting took place in John Cramer's penthouse offices at ten thirty p.m.: Chief of Police Myron Brandon was there, big and impressive, grey-haired, heavy of face. He had brought his aide, Lieutenant Jeffers, a lean, dark man of forty. The district attorney, Ford Summers, soft, florid, and extremely clever, also was present. Captain Paul Gabrino had put aside the interrogation of suspects to appear, tired but attentive. A young male police stenographer and Mrs. Baker were ready to report what was said.

John Cramer was the dominant personality in the room. He spent a moment staring at his desk, then spread his hands and looked up.

"I want one thing understood," he said. "No report of what we say or do here will appear in the newspapers. The Christmas season is a critical time for a department store. It has been said that if a store can break even for the rest of the year, Christmas buying will put it solidly in the black. That's very close to the truth. Any sort of publicity will disturb that buying. This must not happen. Is that clear?"

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"Clear to me," Chief Brandon said. His voice was deep.

Cramer looked around the room, found Barry, and said, "All right, Strand. Step up here and tell us what you've got."

Barry moved forward to a position before Cramer's desk. "We're up against an extortionist," he said.

He told them about the telephone call. He was prepared for the resentment he saw in their faces. Bad news is never welcome.

"Strand." The speaker was Chief Brandon's aide, Lieutenant Jeffers. "I'm wondering why the extortionist didn't ring Mr. Cramer. It would be the obvious thing to do."

"He told me he wanted to make the strongest possible show of force," Strand said. "A bomb in my office is proof that he's capable and deadly serious and not at all afraid."

"We were talking about the phone call," Cramer said.

"Since he'd begun with me," Strand said, "he continued with me—a logical progression. And that's not all. I was his original target because he knows me."

Brandon came forward in his chair. "What!"

"That's right."

"If he knows you, you must know him. Why in hell—?"

"Wait a minute," Barry said. He was sweating now. "I recognised his voice. I must know the man, must know his face. But I can't tell you his name."

"Why not?" Brandon demanded.

"I can't remember it," Barry said. "I can't call up the mental image of the man who fits the voice—not yet, anyway. It's on the edge of my mind, but it won't come through."

Cramer said, "Strand, are you completely serious?"

"I am, sir," Barry said.

"I can't believe it!"

"It's true," Barry said.

"I don't forget names," Cramer said coldly.

And that was true. He did not regard this ability as unusual; he preferred to consider the lack of it in another a flaw in character.

"Describe the voice, Strand," he said. His own voice had a brittle quality that spoke of fraying patience. "Perhaps that will help you to remember. Or perhaps one of us has heard it."

"A male voice," Barry said. "Neither high nor low—medium range. Educated. A trace of New England accent—the soft, broad 'a,' at any rate. That's all I can tell you, and it isn't much."

"It helps a lot," Jeffers said. "Not because of the voice it describes, but because of the voices that can be eliminated."

"Right—and important," Chief Brandon said.

"It's so important," Paul Gabrino said tersely, "that Barry passed it along to me five minutes after the telephone call. My men have been working on it for more than an hour."

Brandon hitched his huge bulk forward. "I want you to leave the thing in our hands, Mr. Cramer. We'll put a tap on Strand's telephones; we'll get a line on this extortionist. We'll blanket the city with squad cars—"

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"One moment," Summers said. He turned to Barry. "I don't remember any warning from the extortionist that you should not contact the police. Was there any such?"

"None at all," Barry said.

"That's strange—at least unordinary."

Gabrino said, "To me, it means he's damned confident. He's well hidden now, a man we've no cause to suspect, a man with no previous record. And he's got what he thinks is a foolproof method of delivery."

"A foolproof method may be invented," Jeffers said. "But I doubt that a police-proof method ever will be. In any event, we'll use false notes. He won't be richer by a penny."

Cramer was staring at his desk, his hands widespread and flat again. Quietly and coldly he said, "No."

Brandon looked startled, and asked, "No what, sir?"

"No to all of this," Cramer said. He let his dark eyes sweep across their faces. "There will be no large police effort and, most particularly, there will be no false money.

"However efficient your organisation may be, you can make mistakes. I'm not going to risk frightening the extortionist. I'll furnish real money. I'm going to meet his demands. And I want no interference from the police. After payment has been made, you can do as you see fit."

"I've got to protest," Brandon said. "You can't pay these fellows off; you can't let 'em win. They'll know they've got the upper hand and try it again, somewhere else. It's the duty of every citizen to see that these extortionists don't get away with it."

Cramer's face paled a little and his eyes glittered. "Thank you for reminding me of my duty," he said, slowly and clearly.

"Damage to my property I can afford." He looked steadily at Brandon. "My concern lies in another direction. Have you forgotten his threat to explode a bomb in one of the busiest sections of the store at a moment of peak activity?"

"No," Brandon said. "But that's all it is—a threat. Not one man in ten million would go through with it."

"You may be right," Cramer said, "though I would not call the man who exploded the bomb in Strand's office either merciful or average." His voice slowed still more. "My first duty is to my customers. I have no right to endanger their lives, unknown to them, in the war against crime. I will pay a hundred thousand dollars to protect them from no more than a threat of harm."

"Mr. Cramer," Barry said, "there are a couple of things we can do that won't endanger anyone."

"Yes?" Cramer asked coldly.

"The man will want his money in small, used bills," Barry said. "Tens, twenties, and fifties, without consecutive serial numbers. He hasn't said so, but he will because nothing else can be of any use to him. If we start making up the package now, we can be sure of time enough to make a complete list of the numbers."

Cramer frowned. "That would be a long list. Too long to

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hope some cashier would cause an arrest by spotting the bills."

"True," Barry said. "But possession of the bills after he is caught would be positive proof of guilt."

Cramer thought a moment. "Stupid of me," he said then, and he said it without rancour. "Mrs. Baker, call Hanson as soon as we've finished. Ask him to get on to it as soon as possible."

"And I have a suggestion," Jeffers said quickly. "There is a delayed-action dye we can use. The bills appear normal until some weeks after delivery."

"Certainly not!" Cramer said. "A man who plants a bomb, angry at being tricked, could strike back at the store a year from now."

He looked at Barry. "What is your other suggestion?"

"The chief is going to tap my telephones. I suggest tape recorders be hooked to the lines also—" He hesitated, then made a helpless gesture. "By playing the tapes back a few hundred times, I might be able to knock a name out of this head of mine."

"By all means!" Cramer said.

"We'll take care of the phones tonight," Brandon said. "I'll have men here in half an hour. Strand will have to stay around."

"He will," Cramer said. "But, first, do you agree to do this my way—no publicity and no police action until the terms of the extortionist have been met?"

Brandon shifted his huge bulk. "I'll go along with you," he growled.

Barry Strand reached his office early the next morning. Gabrino was there ahead of him, with the tape-recordings under his arm. Gabrino's eyes were bloodshot; his jaws were grey with the stubble of beard. He looked at Barry and shook his head.

"I look better than you do," he said. "And I've been up all night." He put the recordings on the desk. "How's the head? Any luck with that name?"

"None," Barry said.

"Try these," Gabrino said. "And call me."

"I will," Barry said.

Gabrino went away. Barry sat at his desk, listening as the reels unwound, eyes closed, face propped in his cupped hands. He had had little sleep, little rest. Still, he could say with certainty, "Not this one, or this, or this . . ." He heard the recordings through, then called Gabrino.

"No," he said. "You haven't found him yet."

He spent the morning in his office, waiting for the telephone to ring. The girl who had taken Clancy's place watched from the outer office with grave-eyed sympathy.

"Mr. Strand," she said finally, "if you'll forgive a suggestion—a telephone never rings when you want it to. When I want a call to come in, I go away for a while."

The look on the girl's face told him she was daring a lot to try to help him. "So?" he said. "Where do you suggest I go?"

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"To the hospital," she said. "I know you're thinking about Clancy. I can take the call, if it comes. I can pretend you're out of the office for a moment, to give the police time to trace it. I can say you'll be back at three o'clock sharp."

"He'll smell a trap," Barry said. "He'll back out."

The girl looked crestfallen. "I suppose so."

"I'll do it anyway," Barry said suddenly. He got his coat and put it on. "He has to make contact to get the money. Let him work to get to me. Let him sweat. It's his turn!"

Roy Clark was not sweating. He was sitting quietly in his car, parked unobtrusively among cars in which other men were waiting. He was quite satisfied with himself. There was a telephone booth in the corner of the carpark just across the pavement. It was used occasionally, often enough so that it was unlikely any specific user would be remembered. After he had used it, he could get back into his car and leave the neighbourhood in a matter of moments. Not that he would have any real need of haste. Clear thinking, an understanding of human nature and patience had eliminated that need.

The sleet had turned to snow, huge, wet flakes, swirling on the wind. He could see the hospital entrances, the faces of all who came and went. Barry Strand would come to the hospital during visiting hours—if not this day, the day after, or the day after that. The woman Strand was going to marry was here, seriously injured. Their engagement had been announced. She was in Room 359, North Wing, on the third floor—a telephone call was all that had been needed to gain this information.

And so Roy Clark waited . . .

A *No Visitors* sign hung from the door-knob of Room 359. But the staff Sister, grey and stocky, had been alerted by Dr. Whitney, and Barry had no trouble getting past her. She took Barry to the room, spoke quietly to the special nurse on duty, and Barry was admitted.

"She's resting under sedation," the special nurse said softly. "She may not know you."

"May I sit with her a few minutes?"

A chair was placed beside the bed. Barry stood for a moment, looking down at Clancy. Her eyes, the upper part of her face, were lost in bandages; her head was positioned firmly between sandbags. Below the bandages, the swelling and the discolouration of mouth and cheeks were heartbreaking. There seemed hardly space between her lips for her soft, panting breath, and the small, confused sounds that spoke of drug-dulled pain. Barry bent to touch her cheek with his lips.

"It's Barry," he whispered. She did not respond.

Barry turned, fumbling for the chair. He sat down heavily, rubbing his face with shaking hands.

"It's not as bad as it looks," the nurse whispered. "The swelling and the bruising are at their worst."

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"Her eyes?"

"There's hope," the nurse said. "There's always hope. Mr. Cramer insists that everything possible be done, and that means a lot. Dr. Latimer, the eye specialist, is flying in to look after Miss Evans. Dr. Latimer can do things no other man can."

He bent his head and covered his face and asked for the help of God humbly. And the staff Sister came into the room and put a hand on his shoulder. "There's a telephone call for you, Mr. Strand," she said. "You can take it at my desk."

Barry went down the corridor, his mind full of Clancy, her pain, her need. He took the telephone and said, "Strand speaking," before he realised he should have delayed and had the call traced as a routine precaution. Then it was too late.

"Do you know who I am?" a man asked. The quiet precise voice with the faint trace of New England accent was unmistakable.

Barry was furious. The man had followed him to the hospital; he was somewhere close by now. Worst of all, Barry was again certain he knew the voice and the man, and again he was unable to give the speaker a face or a name.

"I know you," he said.

"You know I sent you the parcel," the man said, "but that's all you know. If you'd been able to recall my name, the police would have me by now."

"It'll come to me," Barry said.

"No. You heard me for too short a time, too long ago. As it stands, the advantage is mine. You cannot deny instant recognition of my voice. And you will not pretend a need for delay while the police attempt to trace my calls. Is that clear?"

Damn him! Barry thought furiously. "Clear," he said.

"How is Miss Evans?"

"You should see her," Barry said. "If I had my way, you would. It's a picture you'd carry to your grave."

"Not I," the man said. "I have no conscience. My only interest in her is that she convinces you I am completely serious. Do exactly as I say or there will be many more like her. Believe this, Mr. Strand."

"I do," Barry said.

He found a pencil and pad on the desk. He wrote swiftly, then beckoned to the staff Sister and handed her the message: "Call Captain Gabrino, city police, on another line. Have this call traced. Hurry!"

"What response did you get from Mr. Cramer?" the man asked.

"He's agreed to pay," Barry answered. He tried to speak slowly now. "As a matter of fact, he insists that all your demands be met, that all your instructions are followed to the letter. He'll go to any length to protect the store and the public. Nothing will go wrong on our side. If anything goes wrong it won't be his fault. Don't blame him. Don't—"

"Enough!" the man said. "You can't keep me on the line

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until this call is traced. Try to stall again, and I'll hang up. Do it twice and you'll regret it. Understand?"

"Yes," Barry said.

"Now, about the police. I knew they'd be informed no matter what the threat, and I'm prepared to contend with them—up to a point. How do they feel about this?"

"I'll be honest," Barry said. "They're trying to identify you. But they've agreed to keep their distance until after delivery has been made. That's at Mr. Cramer's insistence, and no one argues with John Cramer, not even the police."

"I hope that's the truth."

"It is; I swear it is!"

"I'm still going to be very careful," the man said. "Tell the police I'll discover any trap they may set. When I do, I'll break off immediately and finally. You won't hear from me again. What you will hear is an explosion in Gale's, many times worse than the last one."

A new chill of fear knotted Barry's stomach. "Listen to me! You'll see police officers and police cars; you can't help it. You may see men and women who look like officers in plain clothes. If they are, they'll be doing other work. Don't let them frighten you. Don't panic!"

"I like your concern."

"It's not concern for you," Barry said. "It's concern for the people who come into Gale's. We don't want them hurt, least of all through a horrible mistake. We'll do exactly what you ask."

"Fine," the man said. "And what I ask is money. One hundred thousand dollars. I want it in fives, tens, twenties. Used, unmarked bills, with no consecutive serial numbers. Put the money in a small suitcase and keep the suitcase with you at all times. You will be watched. When I'm satisfied there is no trap, I'll telephone more instructions."

"I'll be ready." The line went dead.

Barry held the voice in his mind, trying to place it now that he could give all his attention to the effort. He tried and failed. He put the phone down, swearing helplessly, and turned to find the staff Sister hurrying towards him. Her face was distressed.

"I'm afraid I was too late," she said. "I couldn't reach Captain Gabrino until just a moment ago."

Barry gave her a tired smile. "Thanks anyway."

"Was it terribly important?"

"So important that I must ask you to say nothing about it to anyone."

The second meeting in John Cramer's office, held at four p.m. was much the same as the first. Barry found himself looking at the same people: John Cramer, Chief Brandon, Ford Summers, Lieutenant Jeffers, Paul Gabrino, the police stenographer, and Mrs. Baker. In addition, there was one new man, Joseph Hanson, the store manager.

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The same feeling of angry resentment was in the air. They questioned him at length.

"Let me get this straight," Lieutenant Jeffers said. "You're to carry the money with you day and night?"

"Right," Barry said.

"You're to make delivery without police supervision?"

"Right," Barry said. "If he smells a trap, he breaks off. The next thing we hear is the bomb. That's what he said." He looked at Cramer's cold face, at Brandon and Summers. He met the blunt thrust of Jeffers' eyes. His voice turned raw. "That's the situation. Accept it, or tell me to go home and stay there!"

Summers patted the air with his plump hands. "Gently, Strand, gently. We're only trying to do our jobs. There's much at stake here. Not money alone—lives. We've got to be most careful, most thorough."

"You have been!" Barry said.

"Strand!" Cramer snapped. "That's enough!" The small man's dark eyes were crystal-hard. "You'll control yourself until we're satisfied."

"I'm trying to, sir. But—"

Paul Gabrino said quickly, "I'm satisfied."

Cramer looked at the others. "You people?"

Chief Brandon lifted his heavy shoulders in a shrug. Summers and Hanson nodded assent. Lieutenant Jeffers shook his head.

"Not yet," he said. There was a thrust in his voice, in his eyes. "He says again the voice was familiar to him. The extortionist admitted Strand knew him in the past. I can't understand why Strand can't give us some sort of a lead to the man."

Cramer's voice was cold. "Well, Strand?"

"I've had enough of this one," Barry said. He turned his eyes to Cramer. "I'd say I did well to remember anything at all about a voice I heard only once a long time ago." He swung a hard face towards Jeffers. "Does that answer your question, lieutenant?"

"I don't like your attitude," Jeffers said. "I—"

"Cut it out," Chief Brandon said roughly. "Strand's girl opened that parcel. He'd remember if he could."

"All right," Cramer said. "Let's hear no more of it." He leaned forward, placing his hands flat upon the desk. "We shall proceed then as instructed by the extortionist."

"It seems we must," Summers said.

"Without police interference," Cramer said. "I want that point perfectly understood. Strand will take the money. He will make delivery. He will report back when delivery has been made. Then, and only then, will you people make any effort towards an arrest. Have I your word on this?"

The official agreement was a nodding of heads—with, Barry thought, a complete lack of enthusiasm.

"Mr. Hanson," Cramer said, "you will have the money brought here, please. At once."

The tall man left his chair; Cramer turned to his secretary.

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" Mrs. Baker," he said. " A small suitcase, please. Have someone from the luggage department bring up an assortment."

" I have a suggestion," Jeffers said.

" Yes? "

" A wrist chain is indicated. Strand is to carry the money with him at all times. A hundred thousand is a lot of money."

" I'm not going to forget it in some washroom," Barry said.

" Of course not," Jeffers said smoothly. " But word that you have it might get around somehow. And there are any number of men capable of taking it away from you. As police, we must ask for reasonable safeguards."

" I think it's a good idea," Cramer said. " Strand? "

Barry lifted his hands tiredly. A suitcase full of money chained to his wrist day and night was an unhappy prospect. And for how long? A few days? A week? Barry let his breath go in a long sigh.

" Do I get a key? " he asked. " Or do you weld it on? "

Barry was given a key. He was glad suddenly that Jeffers had asked for a chain. Without it, Barry knew, the suitcase could be taken from him at almost any time.

The chain was justified. Though it was no guarantee against theft, it complicated theft to the point where few men would attempt it. And when the demands of health, cleanliness, and sanity required that he be separated from the suitcase, he could use the chain to secure the suitcase to the plumbing, the bed, or the steering column of his car.

The reasoning behind the man's insistence that Barry kept the money with him at all times was clear. It would be instantly available. The suitcase would be at least tentative proof that the store was ready and willing to make payment. And further, if a police trap was intended, the police would have to keep Barry under surveillance, and a careful man could discover them.

Barry watched the suitcase being closed and locked. He had a look at the days ahead. So much could go awry. Failure to make delivery of the money could mean a dozen or more shattered, lifeless bodies. Barry closed his mind against that thought.

" Strand," Cramer said. " Over here, please."

He stood beside the desk while the chain was fitted round his wrist. " Tool steel," Lieutenant Jeffers said. " Lose the key and we'll be all day cutting it off."

" I'll keep that in mind," Barry said . . .

He woke early the next morning, with the suitcase on the bed beside him, bound to his chafed wrist by the chain. He carried the suitcase into the bathroom, transferred the chain to a water pipe, showered, shaved, dressed, and breakfasted.

The streets were ice-sheathed. Careful driving required both hands; the chain was attached to the steering column. But it was again biting his wrist when he went from the carpark to the store. He carried the suitcase with him as he went about his duties. He tried his best to appear in every place where he might be expected to appear, and to appear there normally . . .

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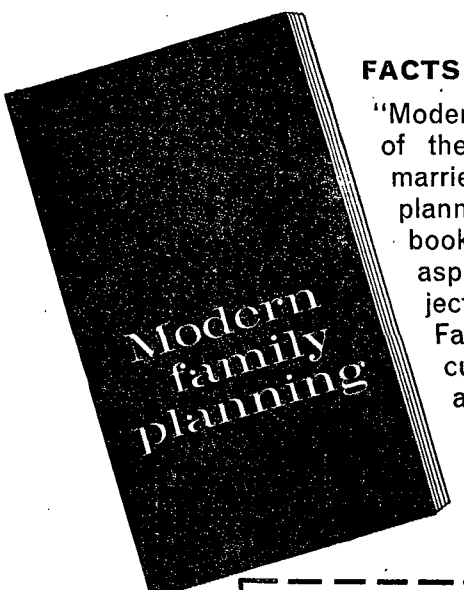

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Roy Clark had not left his house. Upon waking he had found the day raw and cold and not at all inviting. His home, in contrast, was a comfortable haven. The rooms were warm. The smell of freshly brewing coffee mingled pleasantly with that of frying bacon. And why hurry? he asked himself. He was standing at his bedroom window, a small, balding, chunky man of fifty, wearing rumpled pyjamas.

A great many men were prepared and waiting, but not one of them could move until he gave the order. Let them wait, then. Let them worry. Worn-out men would be less alert, more easily managed. He had comfort and security. He would be rested when the time came to act; he would be physically strong, clear of mind, sharp of eye.

"Roy," a woman called from the kitchen. "Your breakfast is ready."

"I'm coming, Edith," he answered.

He ate in dressing-gown and slippers, served by a matronly, dark-haired, gentle-eyed woman of forty-five who had the stamp of "housewife" indelibly upon her.

"Are you going out today?" she asked.

He smiled at her. "In this weather? No need—no need at all. I think I'll potter around in the shop."

His workshop was a basement affair, elaborate by the usual standards, but the result of many years of saving and careful buying. There were woodworking tools and metalworking tools of every description; there were endless cupboards, drawers, and workbenches. No tool was out of place; no litter marred the floor. In all things Roy Clark was a meticulous man.

His project of the moment was a second bomb. He was satisfied that he would really have no need for it, but the bomb was an integral part of his plan, and to complete it was to follow a set course of procedure to a logical end. Moreover, the problem of devising a larger, more efficient, more powerful bomb interested him as a craftsman. It was a challenge to his ability and to the resources of his shop.

Roy Clark did not go out at all that day, or the next. On the third day he felt it was time to make a preliminary reconnaissance, at least. He dressed warmly in clothes that were not conspicuous, took his car from the double garage and drove into the town.

Pushing his way into Gale's, he mingled with other shoppers, a quiet, undemanding customer, searching, perhaps, for just the right gift for a wife or a brother. No one paid him any attention. But he, with eyes a little brighter than normal, paid attention to everyone.

In the course of an hour, he discovered three of Barry's staff, two men and a woman, whom he knew by sight. They all seemed to be concerned with their usual tasks. And he saw Barry Strand three times—twice as the tall security officer moved through the store, and a third time in the coffee bar. Clark sat on a stool at the counter, perhaps a dozen feet from the counter where Strand was

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eating, in full view of Strand. A dangerous game, indeed! And yet so safe. Strand's eyes passed over him with no interest at all. He was not recognised.

He noted the suitcase with satisfaction. There was his money! He was glad to see the chain that attached the suitcase to Strand's wrist. A sensible precaution.

A number of people stared curiously at the suitcase on the seat beside Strand, but no one seemed to display any special interest. No suspiciously alert person had preceded Strand, and none had left the coffee bar in his wake. Still Roy Clark was not satisfied.

Why should he be? He was in command. He could make Strand perform for him as long as he liked. There was no hurry. He would check again tomorrow, he decided, at a different time, in a different way. And then he would make another check later in the week, if it was convenient. Convenient to himself, of course—Roy Clark was the man who called the tune.

Barry Strand went to the hospital once each day, sometimes in the afternoon, more often in the evening. The few moments spent each day with Clancy were for her and for himself, and they were terribly important.

They became more important with each passing day. The excruciating pain in her eyes subsided to something endurable as the pressure within them decreased. She was presently able to exist without stupefying sedation. The swelling in her face went away, and the lacerations healed, though the discolouration held on. And her leg, enclosed in a cast, was hardly more than a discomfort.

These things were not the cause of Barry's worry. Nor was the still unresolved question of Clancy's sight—good, little or none—the worst of his fears. There was something else, a dark shadow that crept towards them relentlessly.

Clancy was a courageous woman. Perhaps, Barry decided, she was too courageous. The prospect of total blindness—she was sure this was to be her lot—had not dimmed her desire to live. Not Clancy. But live in what way? And with whom?

This was the shadow Barry had seen approaching. And one evening at the end of the week it finally reached them. Barry went to the hospital. He set the suitcase on the floor beside the bed, quietly, so that she would not ask about it, would not worry, bent and kissed her lips. Banter she could take; sympathy made her cry; he tried for a light note. " You're looking better all the time, kitten—y'know, less like a train wreck."

" I'm not looking at all," she said.

And the shadow was upon them.

She did not move or speak for a moment; then her hand hunted his, blindly, across the bed. " Barry, I'm going to hurt you," she whispered.

His mouth tightened. " No," he said. " No, Clancy."

" Yes," she said. " It's hurt you now, quick and hard, for just a little while, or give you a deep, dull hurt for years and years and years. I know you'd rather have it quick and hard—"

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"Can't it wait?"

"No," she said. "So listen. My ring is somewhere in a drawer around here. You're going to take it back now, Barry. No bullying me, do you hear?"

"Clancy, listen to—"

"You listen," she said. "When you made the deal with me, you made it with a whole woman. Nobody's going to cheat you, not if I can help it. I'm not a whole woman any more. You don't get me, Barry. You get somebody else."

"There's nothing certain," Barry said, "either way. Dr. Latimer, Dr. Whitney—they don't know. They've told me that. They won't know for a couple of weeks yet. So why—?"

"Wait, Barry," she said. "You think I'm doing this for you. Big me—the tragic heroine making the supreme sacrifice, then walking away into the sunset! No, Barry. I don't want you to be stuck with an invalid for the rest of your life just because you think a promise is a promise, no matter what. But I'm thinking about myself too. I don't want to spend the rest of my life feeling a heel because I landed you with a bad bargain. You see? I've got rights too. I think I'll get along all right totally blind or partially blind. But the worse it is, the prouder I'll be of myself—I had what it took when I needed it. Wouldn't you rather I'd be proud than miserable, Barry? Wouldn't you?"

"Of course, darling. But what's the rush?"

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"Because I've got myself worked up to it now," she said. "And I don't trust myself. I'm not as tough as old boots. I can lose my nerve the same as anybody. So make it easy for me, will you? Say so long to me, Barry, like a good chap."

"Clancy, I can't."

"Yes you can," she said. "A couple of weeks, a month, two months—after that it'll be smooth sailing. Perhaps a little rough at first, but getting smoother all the time. All right?"

He put the palm of her hand against his cheek. She waited for his answer, comforting him with that hand, and when she didn't hear an answer, she said softly, insistently, "The ring, Barry. It's in the drawer of the table beside the bed. Find it and give it to me, so I can give it to you—so I'll know you aren't pulling a fast one on me by just pretending."

She took her hand away and waited.

He found the ring, placed it in the palm of her hand. Then she took his hand, turned it up, placed the ring in his palm, and closed the fingers tightly. "A long, safe journey," she said.

"I'll keep in touch," Barry said thickly.

"Please don't," she whispered. "As a favour to me."

The nurse on night duty had come to know Barry well. She had just answered the ringing telephone when she saw Barry come from Clancy's room, turn and go past the desk, face averted. She had to call him twice before he heard his name and turned. Then she saw his face and gasped.

"Mr. Strand. What on earth's happened?"

Barry's lower lip was caught between his teeth, his eyes were narrowed as if against some inner pain. He could only shake his head mutely in the first moment. Then he found his voice. "Something personal, nurse. Nothing to worry you."

"Oh." She was embarrassed and confused. "I'm sorry."

She remembered the phone, held it out. "For you."

Barry looked at the telephone. The extortionist was on the other end of the line; he knew that, somehow, with complete certainty, and without the need of a better reason than the fact that the man had called here before and that it was time and past for him to call again. Delay and have the call traced? And delay might cause the man to hang up. He took the telephone. "Strand here."

"Go to the public telephone box at the garage and service station south-west corner of Fifty-seventh and Greene." It was the extortionist speaking. "Go straight there in your car and wait for the telephone to ring."

And the line went dead.

This time Barry did not try to hold the voice in his mind. He gave the telephone back to the nurse and turned away.

A bitter east wind was blowing in the streets. Barry had to turn his collar up as he walked to his car. Though it was not yet nine o'clock, the traffic was light, moving cautiously on icy streets.

The service station at Fifty-seventh was closed and dark. The call box of metal and glass stood well away from the other buildings

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in a clutter of dirty snow and ice. It was in full view of the traffic on both streets. The extortionist could drive by, see him sitting there and then scout the neighbourhood for cars that might contain police—all without fear of compromising himself in any way.

Barry parked so as not to obstruct the view of the booth. He transferred the chain from the steering column to his wrist, carried the suitcase with him into the call box and held it between his knees. The light came on as he closed the door. He stood there, obvious as a man in a shop window, lit a cigarette, and waited.

An hour went by. Perhaps a hundred cars passed. No driver or passenger seemed to pay him any special attention. A woman, carrying a shopping bag, edging along the icy pavement, smiled at him. His feet turned to ice; his hands grew numb; his body began to shake; his teeth chattered. He waited an hour and a half before the telephone rang.

Fumbling the receiver, Barry said, " Strand here." His voice was shaking with the cold.

" Go to the public telephone box on the corner of Twentieth and Maple," the extortionist said. " Go straight there."

And again the line went dead.

Barry cursed savagely. The pattern was becoming clear. The extortionist was only checking now.

He could send Barry from one box to another until he was sure Barry was alone and no effort was being made to trace the calls.

Twentieth and Maple was far across the city. The distance allowed the car to warm, the heater to drive the cold from Barry's bones. But two hours of waiting in a telephone box exposed to the full bite of the east wind brought shivering misery again. Two more calls followed in fairly quick order, and then he waited until three o'clock in the morning for a call that did not come.

" I might have waited in the wrong call box," he told John Cramer the next morning.

Cramer was small behind his desk, erect. His thin face was bleak, his wide-spaced, dark eyes held real anger. He was not a man who could abide failure, even in small things. And this was no small thing. This was perhaps the greatest single responsibility any employee of Gale's had ever carried. Cramer stared at Barry a long moment, lips compressed, fighting some sort of inner battle. Then he reached for the telephone.

" Mrs. Baker," he said to his secretary. " I want Strand equipped with cold-weather gear—proofed underwear, coat and shoes, warm gloves—and charge it to my personal account."

He hung up, the anger still in his eyes.

" Thank you," Barry said . . .

There was no call from the extortionist that day. And none that night. Tension and doubts tormented Barry. Had he waited in the wrong call box? Had some unlucky chance—a passing squad car, a man who looked like a cop—convinced the extortionist a trap was being laid for him? Would the next word from him be a booming explosion that would rock the store?

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Another day without word went by. That night Barry fell into bed. His nerves were raw from overstress, his mind heavy with fatigue. His head had no more than touched the pillow when the phone rang. He reached for it, then stayed his hand. The tape recorder. He lunged from the bed, crossed to the machine on a table against the wall. It was faithful to its task; the spools were turning. He went back and picked up the telephone. " Strand here," he said.

A voice said, " Go to the telephone box on the corner of Sixty-fifth and Concord. It will ring only once in exactly fifteen minutes from now." But it was not the same voice. The extortionist had thought of a tape recorder, and had disguised his voice beyond recognition, or someone else had called for him.

A real smart aleck, Barry said savagely to himself.

He dressed, fumbling in his haste—fifteen minutes was very little time to travel the distance he had to go. He wore the warm underwear and the shoes, but his own topcoat and hat. Quick identification was more important than comfort. He took the suitcase of money and left the house, running. He drove much faster than was sensible on icy streets and reached the appointed telephone with only moments to spare. It rang exactly on time.

Now the voice was that of the extortionist again, crisp, businesslike. He sent Barry to another telephone five miles away again with a time limit. Hurrying towards it, Barry felt the lift of hope. The time limit was something new. He liked it. These things spoke of a decision finally made.

This is it! he told himself. *This is the night!*

Barry was sent on again, without a time limit, and he waited two hours before the telephone rang. There was another short jump, another time limit, another long jump and another long wait. Barry's hope gave way to despair. The cold got to him in spite of the warmer clothes. New weariness piled on old. At two thirty in the morning he was close to the limit of his endurance.

He was sitting in a booth on the edge of the main road, twenty-five miles from the city limits. The country about him was flat, treeless, desolate. It was snow-clad now, swept by the full force of the wind. There were no houses, no buildings of any kind within several miles, and that was the reason the telephone box was here—to provide the stranded motorist with a means of reaching help.

In the first hour, Barry had tried to keep alert by watching the traffic, searching for a car that would warrant suspicion—a car that passed twice, a driver who gave him more than the usual attention. He had seen none. The traffic was light, huge lorries for the most part, a clutter of two or three cars every ten or fifteen minutes, an occasional single car. In the second hour, when the cold had worked deep into his bones, Barry sat huddled and shivering, only half awake, hardly caring at all.

Another half hour, Barry said. *I can stick it that long. I've got to!* And the telephone rang.

" This is Strand," Barry said.

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"And this is the final step," the extortionist said. "I warn you—follow my instructions exactly. I'll check each move you make. One wrong move and I'll break off."

Barry's voice was thick. "Just tell me what to do!"

"Go west on the main road," the extortionist said, "at exactly twenty-five miles an hour. After a certain number of miles, a car will pass you. After passing, the brake lights will flash three times, then three times again. You will be just short of a crossroad. Stop at that road, leave the suitcase in the ditch at your right, turn around and go back to the city. Is that clear? Be sure of it! We won't do this twice."

"I've got it," Barry said.

"Go at once, then," the extortionist said. "Don't attempt to make a call from there. I'm tapped into the line. I'll know."

"I'm going," Barry said.

The line could be tapped, but the extortionist was probably bluffing. Still, Barry would not risk frightening the man at this point. He got his car started as quickly as he could and drove west, an eye on the speedometer. Twenty-five miles an hour, the man had said. The speed was much less than average. He was passed many times in the next half hour.

It'll be a single car, he told himself, *on a straight and empty stretch of road. It'll come up behind me, slow down, and hold there to check me out.*

And presently a car performed in just that way. Headlights came into his rear-view mirror. They came within a few car lengths, then held the distance, matching his speed exactly. The lights remained on high beam. Barry could not say it was the extortionist's car beyond all doubt, but he was almost sure it was.

The car swung out and passed. The windows were fogged with the warmth inside, but Barry could see the dark outline of the driver. Was this the man at last?—just there, no more than a dozen feet away, the man who had caused all the pain and misery? Barry's throat became parched, his mouth went dry.

He watched the car pull in ahead. It drew away perhaps a quarter of a mile, then again it matched its speed with Barry's, holding the interval. Not only had Barry time to see the outline of the driver but he was able to see the car. Now, though he didn't consciously will it, certain comparisons occurred to him.

The car ahead was ten years old. The blue smoke of its exhaust spoke of a worn engine, lost power and a top speed of possibly eighty miles an hour. Barry's car was only a year old. It had a powerful engine in top condition, a booming pickup, good road stability, and a top speed of over a hundred miles an hour.

The brake lights on the car ahead blinked three times, then three times again. It was the signal. © John and Ward Hawkins 1963

★ ***The last Part of PANIC by John and Ward Hawkins appears in next month's Argosy—on sale April 10***

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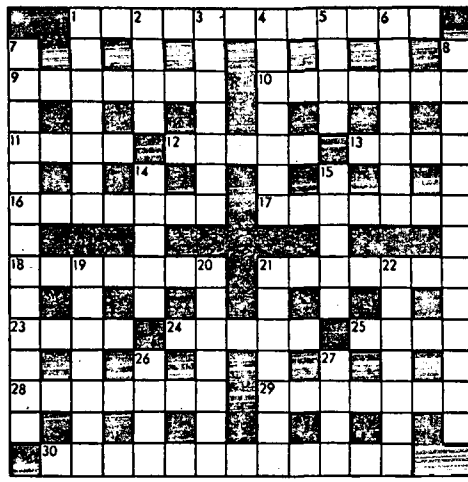
ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution on page 91



ACROSS

1 Hotbed of forgers ? (5-7).

9 Don't tease, just strip ! (7).

10 Poem—if you are able to undo it (7).

11 No one comes back for this sign (4).

12 Equine refusal (5).

13 A bit abrupt perhaps ? (4).

16 Bugs in varieties (7).

17 It's rather a drag (7).

18 Sounds like a noisy eater (7).

21 Spear with nitwit at the tip (7).

23 Monkey at the top (4).

24 Springtime girl (5).

25——of remorse, perhaps (4).

28 One can hole up in this (7).

29 Thomas, for instance (7).

30 Does he pull the wool over their eyes ? (5-7).

DOWN

1 Animal worries (7).

2 Eastern city—a dive (4).

3 Do they hold four-poster trials? (7).

4 Don't take it lying down (7).

5 What Mother Hubbard's dog had (4).

6 Jack—or his master (2-5).

7 This is your life ! (13).

8 Epithet for a dairymaid (13).

14 Briefly, it's chilly, for the virago (5).

15 Rope is nothing to a girl (5).

19 Thickness—of a loaf mainly ! (7).

20 Connects—ere salt is spilt (7).

21 Shorten a viaduct (7).

22 Corrupt gardener ? (7).

26 Merry monarch (4).

27 Pussy patter (4).

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